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Chair: Ms. Mejía Vélez ..... (Colombia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.00 a.m.

Agenda item 27: Advancement of women (A/71/38, A/71/209, A/71/219, A/71/223, A/71/306 and A/71/398)

1. **Ms. Puri** (Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)) said that the seventy-first session of the General Assembly was a crucial opportunity to review progress and identify new opportunities for advancing women's rights and achieving the goals of the "Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step It Up for Gender Equality" campaign. The Third Committee would play an important role in those processes. The high-level summit to address large movements of refugees and migrants held in September 2016 provided a solid basis for action to uphold the rights of women and girls fleeing situations of conflict. UN-Women was ready to support the crafting of the proposed compacts on migrants and refugees.

2. If equality was to be achieved, women's economic empowerment was essential. The key messages of the interim report of the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment should be catalysts for the work of the current session. Women everywhere continued to struggle for equal pay, and women entrepreneurs lacked access to finance, while discrimination and structural barriers affected women in the informal sector and those performing domestic and unpaid care work. The consensus that economies performed better when women and men could participate on an equal basis must guide action. The roadmap adopted at the sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women should be the basis for gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Efforts to collect and use gender statistics should be stepped up; the Entity's flagship initiative "Making Every Woman and Girl Count" and its recently launched partnership on gender statistics demonstrated how statistics could be used effectively.

3. Legal frameworks that did not discriminate against women and actively protected women's rights were essential. Laws restricting women's rights in any area of life must be repealed. Domestic legal frameworks must accelerate progress towards gender equality through affirmative action and by supporting women's equal participation in all aspects of leadership and decision-making, access to economic and financial resources, and the right to live free from violence.

4. Violence against women kept them from realizing their rights and incurred quantifiable costs for society as a whole. The three reports of the Secretary-General on that subject made it clear that, despite some progress, much remained to be done to ensure that women and girls could enjoy the right to live free from violence. The report on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls (A/71/219) stressed that weak law enforcement remained a challenge. The report on intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilations (A/71/209) made it clear that the complex nature of violence against women, including harmful practices such as female genital mutilations, required a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach. The report on trafficking in women and girls (A/71/223) deserved particular attention in view of the intensification of migrant flows, which heightened the risk of women and girls being trafficked for sexual exploitation, domestic servitude and forced marriage.

5. Action on gender issues must be prioritized under each of the Sustainable Development Goals so that measurable progress for women and girls could be made by 2020. At the 2015 Global Leaders' Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A Commitment to Action, 72 heads of State and Government had promised to prioritize gender when implementing the 2030 Agenda and 24 had provided updates on progress one year later. Achievements to date included the establishment of national action plans and legislation to end violence against women, the provision of services for survivors of such violence and improved quota provisions for women's representation in elected bodies. The highest level of government should be accountable for gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls. Despite many challenges, such as armed conflicts and growing inequality, the current unprecedented level of commitment to gender equality meant that change was possible.

6. **Ms. Kanem** (Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on intensifying efforts to end obstetric fistula (A/71/306), said that despite

considerable progress over the past two years towards reducing maternal mortality and disabilities, much more remained to be done to eliminate obstetric fistula by 2030. Women with obstetric fistula were left physically, mentally and emotionally scarred, and most often rejected by their husbands and communities and forced to live in isolation. Virtually eliminated in many countries, obstetric fistula continued to affect poor, vulnerable and marginalized women and girls in the developing world and was therefore a stark manifestation of health inequity. The international community must act urgently to eliminate such needless suffering.

7. UNFPA was working with the International Confederation of Midwives and other partners in the Global Midwifery Programme to help States strengthen their midwifery programmes and policies in light of the frontline role played by midwives in saving the lives of mothers and babies. Every pregnancy and birth could be safe if the international community committed to protecting the human rights, well-being and dignity of every woman and girl everywhere.

8. **Mr. Coloma Grimberg** (Chile) asked for more information regarding the cause of obstetric fistula, the services needed to treat it and whether those services existed.

9. **Mr. Ríos Sánchez** (Mexico) said that migrant women and children were especially vulnerable and were at risk of being exploited by people trafficking networks. He asked the Deputy Executive Director to comment on the need for all relevant United Nations agencies, and in particular UN-Women, to address the need to protect migrant women.

10. **Ms. Kanem** (Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)) explained that obstetric fistula was caused by a prolonged and difficult labour that resulted in a rupture of the birth canal. Prevention was key, as many of the contributory factors were preventable. It occurred much more frequently in younger mothers: teenagers were highly vulnerable to the pressure created and were likely to experience ruptures. The rupture led to negative social consequences, such as isolation, because it caused incontinence. Skilled obstetric care was needed, and surgery could remedy the problem so that the women could reintegrate into society. However, the necessary surgery was not readily available enough.

11. **Ms. Puri** (Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) said that UN-Women would continue to collaborate with other agencies working on migration in relation to factors such as development and trafficking.

12. **Ms. Hayashi** (Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) said that, prior to making a commitment to Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, 189 Member States had already committed to achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls by becoming parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Committee, in its concluding observations based on States parties' periodic reports, systematically called for the realization of gender equality throughout implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and in 2016 it had begun including references to specific Goals in its observations as a pilot exercise. It had also started to include a systematic reference to indicator 5.1.1 (regarding legal frameworks to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex) in the lists of issues and questions used in the review of State party reports.

13. Since the Convention was the only human rights instrument that provided comprehensive protection of the human rights of women, it should serve as a source for identifying the new areas to be covered by the legal frameworks envisaged in indicator 5.1.1. The Committee was ready to contribute to the process of follow-up and review of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. In that connection, it would provide input for the 2017 high-level political forum on sustainable development, which would focus on poverty eradication.

14. The Committee had issued a joint statement with the Committee on Migrant Workers, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and UN-Women to mark the occasion of the high-level summit to address large movements of refugees and migrants, welcoming the political will expressed in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants . In the statement, States were called on to: adopt gender-responsive, rights-based policies to address the root causes of forced movements of refugees and migrants; ensure women's full and equal participation in the

formulation of such policies as well as in conflict prevention and resolution; and recognize the contribution of refugee and migrant women to global economic growth and sociocultural progress.

15. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women focused on refugee, asylum-seeking and migrant women in many of its concluding observations, which addressed rights violations such as sexual violence and abusive working conditions. The Committee's recommendations to curb such violations included the provision of free legal aid and information in the relevant languages, and regulation and monitoring of recruitment agencies. In its work on individual communications under article 2 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention and in its concluding observations, the Committee had repeatedly called on States to comply with the principle of non-refoulement; 5 of the 10 final decisions on individual communications adopted over the past year concerned non-refoulement. The root causes of large-scale population movements were diverse, and they included discrimination, gender-based violence, exploitation, climate change and environmental degradation. The Committee would continue to seek to strengthen States' accountability for addressing those root causes and protecting the rights of refugee and migrant women and girls.

16. Migration also affected women and girls who stayed behind, including rural women, who tended to be disproportionately affected by a lack of infrastructure and services. In March 2016, the Committee had adopted general recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women, providing guidance to States parties on their obligations, which included ensuring that rural women had access to political life and adequate living conditions. The Committee was updating general recommendation No. 19 (1992) on violence against women, a process which had begun in 2015. The updated version would address violence in all areas of life — including cyberspace — and in relation to such phenomena as migration. The Committee was also working on a general recommendation on women's and girls' right to education. It was desperately needed as 41 million girls worldwide continued to be denied access to primary education. Lastly, it was drafting a general recommendation on disaster risk reduction and women and girls, to address the intersecting forms of discrimination that were compounded in crisis situations. The Committee would invite States parties to comment and hold regional-level consultations on the draft recommendation.

17. Regarding treaty body strengthening and cooperation with partners, the Committee continued to enhance the structure of its dialogues with States parties, had decided to limit the length of its concluding observations, and had streamlined its procedures for assessing States parties' follow-up reports and adopting lists of issues and questions for the simplified reporting procedure. Along with the additional meeting time granted under General Assembly resolution 68/268, those measures had enabled the Committee to slightly reduce its backlog of State reports.

18. **Mr. Kelly** (Ireland) said that Ireland had advocated the inclusion of a goal on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Gender equality was a prerequisite for ensuring sustainable development and could only be achieved if the rights of all members of society were respected.

19. Civil society organizations, which had a key role to play in highlighting discrimination against women, were operating in an increasingly restrictive and dangerous environment. The commitment of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to addressing reprisals sent an important message of support to civil society organizations and human rights defenders. He welcomed the Committee's cooperation with civil society organizations, including the updating of general recommendation 19 on violence against women. In that connection, he asked Ms. Hayashi to elaborate on the scope for further developing engagement between civil society organizations and the treaty monitoring bodies, and whether more systematic engagement would strengthen their respective roles.

20. **Ms. Omiya** (Japan) said that she appreciated the Committee's efforts to refer to specific Sustainable Development Goals in its concluding observations. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development should be implemented through concrete measures. Japan had established national headquarters for the promotion of the Sustainable Development Goals and was working

to implement each Goal, including Goal 5. She asked Ms. Hayashi how individual Governments should cooperate with the Committee.

21. **Ms. Kirianoff Crimmins** (Switzerland), highlighting the importance of gender mainstreaming in security and counter-extremism strategies, said that women's participation in such efforts should be encouraged. She asked Ms. Hayashi what role the Committee should play in discussing those issues with States Parties.

22. Since 2014, States Parties had been able to use the simplified reporting procedure for national reports, yet the number of reports pending review by the Committee had increased. She asked the Committee to provide more information on its experience with the simplified reporting procedure and explain the reason for the increased number of pending State reports.

23. **Ms. Seppäläinen** (European Union) said that her delegation appreciated the fact that, in addition to its regular work, the Committee had held public meetings with civil society organizations and national human rights institutions. She noted with appreciation the Committee's consideration of eight State reports submitted under article 18 of the Convention, the adoption of a statement on 20 November 2015 on the refugee crises and the protection of women and girls, and the Committee's repeated entreaties to all States Parties to refrain from invoking customs or religious considerations to justify non-compliance with their legal obligations under the Convention.

24. Noting with interest general recommendation 33 on women's access to justice, she commended the seriousness with which the Committee addressed reprisals or intimidation against individuals or groups seeking to cooperate with the Committee. She asked Ms. Hayashi to provide more information on the challenges of ensuring women's access to justice and possible solutions.

25. The Committee had taken steps to implement General Assembly resolution 68/268 on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system, including by introducing the simplified reporting procedure. She asked Ms. Hayashi to elaborate on the effects that measures taken under resolution 68/268 had had on the Committee's work and its cooperation with other human rights treaty bodies.

26. **Ms. Kofoed** (Denmark) said that the Sustainable Development Goals highlighted the need to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls, which was a pre-condition for achieving sustainable development. Despite some progress, however, discriminatory laws continued to curtail women's freedom of movement, enjoyment of economic and political rights, and access to and control over basic resources and services. Women accounted for the bulk of the world's poor, despite working more hours than men; many girls were forced into early marriage; and female representation in parliaments remained low. She asked Ms. Hayashi to elaborate on the areas that needed to be prioritized in order to ensure the implementation of target 5.1 of the Goals on ending all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere, as well as the need to combat gender stereotypes.

27. **Mr. Holtz** (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) said that the effective and equal participation of women in public and economic life was an essential element of good governance, effective democracy and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Tackling violence against women remained a top priority for the United Kingdom and progress had been made: prosecutions of the perpetrators of such violence were at an all-time high and the law on domestic abuse had been strengthened. Commending the Committee for its approach to tackling reprisals and intimidation against individuals or groups seeking to cooperate with the Committee, he asked Ms. Hayashi to elaborate on particular issues of concern in that regard and what States Parties could do to ensure that all women everywhere were able to engage with its work.

28. **Ms. Jazukevičiūtė** (Lithuania) said that the work of the Committee was an important basis for evaluating progress made by States Parties in achieving target 5.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals. She commended the Committee for its involvement in the development of indicator 5.1.1 on the existence of legal frameworks to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex. She asked Ms. Hayashi to elaborate on the Committee's contribution to the implementation of the

Sustainable Development Goals, in particular target 5.1. In addition, given that data collection and information sharing were crucial to the implementation of target 5.1, she asked Ms. Hayashi to provide more information on cooperation and systematic exchange of information between the Committee and other treaty bodies, especially in the light of resolution 68/268 on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system.

29. **Ms. Dravec** (Slovenia) said that the national development strategy of Slovenia, currently at the drafting stage, the national programme and action plan for equality between men and women and the act prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of sex would all help the country to implement the Committee's recommendations. Noting with appreciation the adoption of general recommendation 33 on women's access to justice and general recommendation 34 on the rights of rural women, she asked the Chair if she could provide examples of successful efforts to address gender stereotypes in judicial systems and specify which forms of discrimination facing rural women and girls were the most pressing and required urgent attention.

30. **Ms. Simenstad** (Norway) said that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, in its general recommendation 19 on violence against women, had addressed a form of discrimination that was not covered in the Convention but had been included in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development under target 5.2 on eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls everywhere.

31. Welcoming the Committee's intention to contribute to the indicators for target 5.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals, she asked Ms. Hayashi what modalities existed for the Committee to interact with the Statistical Commission, which was responsible for drafting the indicators. Noting the interaction of the Committee with other treaty bodies that dealt with issues related to women's rights, she asked if there was a need to ensure coherence in that regard and whether the current set-up was satisfactory.

32. **Ms. Hayashi** (Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women), responding to questions, said that the Committee was one of the pioneering bodies in efforts to strengthen the treaty bodies. For instance, prior to the adoption of resolution 68/268 on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system, the Committee had already agreed to have its summary records issued in English only and had reduced the word limit for concluding observations to 6,000 words. The Committee had also introduced the simplified reporting procedure, which could be used only for States Parties that had submitted a core report within the previous five years. As civil society participation in the Committee's public meetings was important, the Committee also held informal briefings for non-governmental organizations and organized meetings between members of the Committee and civil society actors. Such engagement should be maintained under the treaty body strengthening procedure.

33. In 2015 the human rights treaty bodies had adopted a set of guidelines against intimidation or reprisals. The Committee had not appointed a special rapporteur on reprisals but the Bureau would monitor reprisals and decisions would be made in plenary should any specific cases be reported.

34. In response to the questions on the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee was working with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women to provide input on the indicators to the Statistical Commission and the high-level political forum on sustainable development. At the domestic level, States Parties should have basic laws and policies in place that prohibited discrimination against women, promoted empowerment, guarded against reprisals and gave a voice to civil society, with a view to ensuring that no one was left behind.

35. Regarding access to justice, the continued existence of discriminatory laws and customs was of great concern. It was vital to put an end to discriminatory practices justified on cultural grounds and ensure that judges and legal professionals received training.

36. Lastly, regarding coherence with other treaty bodies, the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights subsidized joint meetings of the human rights treaty bodies, and the Committee was investigating possibilities for further collaboration to ensure that the principle of gender

equality was taken into account by the other treaty bodies.

37. **Ms. Puri** (Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) said that UN-Women worked closely with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to strengthen normative intergovernmental support to States Parties, improve data collection and broaden the knowledge base. UN-Women also worked on the ground to support States Parties in the preparation of their State reports and to engage with civil society with a view to assessing the extent to which States Parties were meeting their obligations under the Convention.

38. **Ms. Šimonović** (Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its causes and consequences) introducing her report on violence against women, its causes and consequences (A/71/398), said that during her mandate she would focus on topics that included protection and services for female survivors of violence; a possible global code of conduct for security and police forces; violence against women in the context of forced displacement and refugee flows; the connections between fundamentalism or extremism and gender-based violence against women, as well as its root causes; capacity-building for legal professionals and law enforcement officials dealing with violence against women; the new challenge posed by online violence against women; elimination of discriminatory laws and their negative impact in perpetuating or contributing to violence against women; and violence against women in politics.

39. The first section of the report provided an update regarding the adequacy of the legal framework on violence against women, taking into account the views of global and regional mechanisms. Member States and other interested stakeholders were providing input on five questions relating to the potential need for a separate legally binding treaty on violence against women, and input from other States or regional groups would be welcomed.

40. In November 2015, she had called on all States to establish a "femicide watch" as femicide, the killing of women because of their sex or gender was one of the focus areas of her mandate. Her report provided guidance to States on modalities to establish a femicide watch and acknowledged the key steps taken at the intergovernmental level to combat femicide. Gender-based violence was recognized in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a major obstacle to social and economic development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition to Goal 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, the eliminating of femicide was key to Goals 11 and 16. An established femicide watch could thus be part of the process of monitoring progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and be supported by all relevant United Nations agencies, including UN-Women, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

41. Existing good practices on femicide included the Domestic Violence Fatality Review in Washington State in the United States of America and the Femicide Census project in the United Kingdom, and, at the regional level, the Latin American Model Protocol for the investigation of gender-related killings of women. States and other stakeholders should provide examples of other good practices or existing legislative initiatives.

42. Various international, regional, and national courts had also created jurisprudence on femicide. An online collection of landmark court cases on femicides would be made publicly available so that judges working on such cases would have access to them. Further examples from regional and national courts would be welcomed.

43. Femicide watches or observatories on violence against women could be established as separate mechanisms or instead be attached to existing national mechanisms or observatories on violence against women. Femicide watches or review panels should be established as interdisciplinary bodies. Additionally, the mere existence of femicide watches and observatories on violence against women would increase awareness of femicide and galvanize actions to prevent it.

44. In the preceding year, she had visited South Africa and Georgia and had presented the relevant country visit reports in June 2016 at the thirty-second session of the Human Rights Council. More recently, she had visited Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory/State of Palestine and would report to the Human Rights Council in June 2017 on that visit. She

would be conducting visits to Argentina, Australia, the Bahamas and Bulgaria in the near future.

45. **Mr. Coloma Grimberg** (Chile) said that his country was one of 14 Latin American and Caribbean States among the 25 States with the world's highest rates of femicide. Chile would do everything possible to combat that extreme violence and help the Special Rapporteur in her work. As female genital mutilation was also of concern to Chile, he would welcome information on the subject, including on actions being taken to combat it.

46. **Ms. Abdelkawy** (Egypt) said that the late issuance of the Special Rapporteur's report had not left enough time for delegations to prepare for the interactive dialogue. In future, it would be helpful if the report could be provided to Member States earlier or the interactive dialogue could be postponed.

47. While there was no normative gap regarding violence against women, the implementation of existing measures remained a problem. The limited resources available should be invested in strengthening existing mechanisms to achieve real gender equality and empowerment of women. Although the general recommendations of treaty bodies were subjective and non-binding, it would be useful for Member States to reach a consensus on their content. Lastly, as previous mandate holders had concentrated solely on violence against women in family settings, the Special Rapporteur should focus specifically on other contexts, such as the workplace.

48. **Ms. Morton** (Australia) said that there was a lack of critical long-term support for survivors in nearly all countries. In Australia at least one woman per week was killed by a partner or former partner, and her delegation was therefore keen for the issue to remain on the agenda. Accountability must rest at the highest levels of Government, and it should be supported by data collection. Accordingly, Australia was looking into evidence-based preventative measures, and she would welcome information regarding best practices related to the use of evidence in prevention programmes.

49. **Ms. Nescher** (Liechtenstein) said that she would welcome further information on any feedback received regarding the idea of a femicide watch and any statistics that had not yet been published. Verbal and physical violence against women, notably in politics, continued even in countries that had prioritized women's empowerment and gender equality. She asked what caused such violence and how it could be remedied.

50. **Mr. Nuno** (Spain) said that his country's system for eliminating and preventing violence against women was constantly improving. A recent study in Spain on young people, new technologies and gender-based violence had also had a significant social impact. As part of its external human rights policy and in international cooperation, Spain continued to work on the connection between gender-based violence and development, which had been made clear in the 2030 Agenda. Furthermore, Spain provided political and financial support for various policies designed to reduce the high level of impunity. In that regard, he wished to highlight the "Recommendations for the effective investigation of the crime of femicide", which were widely available in the Spanish-speaking world, and the model protocol on the investigation of femicide. Unfortunately, data collection was difficult, as many victims of violence still did not file complaints. He asked how progress could be made towards ending that silence.

51. **Ms. Moreiera Costa Pittella** (Brazil) said that in 2015 Brazil had adopted legislation criminalizing femicide and imposing harsher penalties on those who harmed women and girls. The legislation amended the Brazilian criminal code by defining femicide as any crime that involved the assassination of women for gender-related reasons, including domestic violence, discrimination, or contempt for women. However, the State's obligation to protect women extended beyond enacting legislation. Regarding the recommendations on modalities for femicide watch mechanisms, she asked how Member States could coordinate their actions at the regional or global level. More information would be helpful to determine how intergovernmental work could contribute to identifying gaps in the intervention system in order to prevent femicide.

52. **Ms. Tasuja** (Estonia) said it was evident that various groups and committees believed it preferable to strengthen existing United Nations mechanisms on violence against women rather than establish a new convention and related monitoring body. In that regard,

she asked for more information as to why a new legally binding convention might be considered more effective. Furthermore, given the existing shortcomings of the data collection system, she wondered how the unreliability of some information sources could affect the implementation of measures to counter violence against women.

53. **Ms. Simenstad** (Norway) asked whether the recommendations for collective change could be more specific and prioritized, what would be needed to effect such change, and how men could be involved.

54. **Ms. Phipps** (United States of America) said that crime data collection was essential for preventing violence and providing services to survivors. Gathering evidence on killings to ascertain common trends could also serve as a model for combating other forms of violence. The Special Rapporteur was correct to emphasize the protection of women and girls in conflict or humanitarian situations as they were among the most vulnerable. It was necessary to raise awareness and develop solutions to address emerging threats against women and girls, such as the growth in online violence which had accompanied increased use of information technologies. Lastly, she asked what would be included in the Special Rapporteur's proposed code of conduct for security and police forces.

55. **Mr. Holtz** (United Kingdom) said that, despite the progress made, the level of violence against women, particularly between intimate partners and within families, remained shockingly high. He would welcome further information about actions to reach the most marginalized women and girls, particularly those most affected by conflict, displacement and multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

56. **Ms. Doláková** (Czechia) said that her delegation welcomed the growing attention to preventive measures and data collection, as well as the recognition of gender stereotypes and concepts of masculinity as issues that needed to be addressed. With regard to the recommendation in the Special Rapporteur's report to encourage courts to gain specialized expertise on femicide and violence against women, she wished to know if there were any specific examples of best practice in that area.

57. **Mr. Jelinski** (Canada) said that the risk of violence against women and girls was amplified in conflict or other humanitarian emergencies, and such violence had a negative ripple effect throughout society. The recommendation for a femicide watch recognized not only the lack of reliable data, but also the importance of such data in tackling femicide. In that regard, he would welcome examples of best practices in the collection, analysis and reporting of data that responded to the need for disaggregated information.

58. **Ms. Coroa** (Portugal) said that violence against women and girls was a cross-cutting issue that could occur in any setting, and she would appreciate advice on concrete measures, apart from strong legal frameworks, to eliminate practices, stereotypes and social norms that perpetuated discrimination and violence. Furthermore, given the scope and consequences of violence against women and girls, she asked how Member States could improve existing mechanisms, data collection and analysis in order to accurately measure the magnitude and prevalence of such violence.

59. **Ms. Zahir** (Maldives) said that her country's new gender equality act would strongly enhance the legal policy framework for gender equality by providing for full protection of rights and establishing institution-wide compliance mechanisms. However, despite existing stringent laws and policies to prevent violence and protect women and girls, many countries, including the Maldives, were still constrained with regard to providing adequate assistance to deal with such crimes and appropriate support services for victims of violence. The Special Rapporteur could play in an instrumental role in that regard.

60. **Ms. Seppäläinen** (Observer for the European Union), speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States, said that United Nations bodies had an important role to play in addressing violence against women and girls. Further information on how organizations and Governments could cooperate in data collection would be welcomed. Moreover, combating impunity for crimes against women must remain a priority. In that regard, she asked to hear more about good practices in establishing specialized units, and providing police officers and prosecutors with specific expertise on risk assessment and management.

61. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the tragic situation of the Palestinian population under Israeli occupation was deteriorating on a daily basis. Israeli forces had illegally killed over 20 Palestinian women and girls since October 2015 with total impunity. Recalling the Special Rapporteur's press release of 26 September 2016 touching on the issue of settler violence, including the violence suffered by the teachers and students of Qurduba school in Hebron, she asked what the international community must do to redress the absence of Israeli accountability for the actions of its illegal settler population.

62. **Ms. Koefoed** (Denmark) said that gender-based violence was a worldwide human rights challenge faced by millions of women. Violence against women and girls impeded their achievement of equality, reduced human capital and undermined economic growth. The root causes of discrimination must be addressed through access to education and health care, equal participation in the economy, and criminal accountability for the perpetrators of gender-based violence. Denmark wished to know which awareness-raising and advocacy tools the Special Rapporteur found most effective, and what could be done to combat sexual and gender-based violence in conflict zones.

63. **Ms. Dravec** (Slovenia) said that said that zero tolerance of violence against women was a priority for her country's national programme for equality between men and women, 2015-2020. In 2016, the Government had established a working group on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, and the working group could be considered a form of observatory. The Government had also made legislative changes recognizing stalking and forced marriage as criminal offences. Slovenia requested the Special Rapporteur to share good practices on femicide watches and observatories on violence against women both regionally and nationally, and to specify the international actions that would ultimately eliminate violence against women and girls by 2030.

64. **Mr. Marani** (Argentina) reaffirmed his country's support for the Special Rapporteur's decision to focus on femicide, an issue of great concern throughout Latin America, and asked how to involve civil society and other actors in the fight against that extreme form of violence against women.

65. **Ms. Sukacheva** (Russian Federation) called on the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to issue reports in a timely manner, so that delegations could become familiar with the content. While the prevention of violence against women was addressed in the dialogues between States and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the problem was not a lack of legislative measures but rather a lack of their implementation. Consequently, the focus should be not on developing new international norms or introducing additional monitoring mechanisms on highly specialized topics, which would cause issues to become fragmented and resources to be spread thinly, but rather on implementing existing measures.

66. **Mr. Barkan** (Israel) said that it was sad to hear that the Palestinians were attacking Israel instead of entering negotiations for peace. In Palestinian society, women were restricted to being wives and mothers, and they were subjected to serious violence, including socially acceptable family honour killings. Moreover, women were incited to commit violence against Israel. The delegate asked what the international community would do to change the attitude of Palestinians towards women.

67. **Ms. Šimonović** (Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences) said that she apologized for her part in the delay in issuing her report in all languages. She had submitted the text for editing and translation prior to her departure on mission to Israel and Palestine. Her report should be considered a living document, and it would be updated when delegations provided information on best practices, legislation and jurisprudence in relation to femicide. She invited all States to focus on implementing the report's recommendations. The proposal to establish a femicide watch would, she hoped, facilitate the collective changes that were needed. Practical implementation mechanisms were required.

68. The mandate of the Special Rapporteur focused on examining the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and identifying modalities that produced results, such as the femicide watch model. The report contained references to examples from the United Kingdom of

models prepared by non-governmental organizations. It was important to begin implementing models and then try to engage Governments, which were ultimately responsible for collecting data and preventing violence. She was cooperating with other United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and she would be reporting to the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice to work on discriminatory laws concealed in criminal codes.

69. Accurate data were crucial for determining requirements for preventing violence against women, including femicide. In response to Brazil's questions regarding regional cooperation, good practices and better implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, she explained that the femicide watch recommendation was an operational mechanism under Sustainable Development Goal 5. The model presented was flexible and could be implemented in a number of ways, and the same model could be applied to other forms of violence against women in different countries. It was also important to focus on prevention and on taking measures to address victim silence, which was still a challenge with regard to domestic violence.

70. In reply to questions regarding possible elements for a code of conduct, the Special Rapporteur highlighted regional initiatives in Africa and State initiatives relating to a code of conduct for police forces, as officers were often insufficiently sensitive when dealing with violence against women. She hoped that focusing on the issue would lead to the collection of good practices and illustrate how to achieve results, provide good training and formulate good policies. Good models on data collection existed, and she would share additional information on best practices with all States, possibly through her website. She requested information from Spain on best practices for femicide prevention as she was aware of good practices there, and specific data from States on the targeting of marginalized groups of women, including those from certain ethnic groups.

71. It was important to collect jurisprudence at all levels to provide courts with good examples from which to gain specific expertise, which was lacking in most States. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had knowledge of useful cases at regional level that properly reflected the gender perspective in femicide cases. Responding to questions regarding the need for a new United Nations convention or other international instrument, the Special Rapporteur asked all countries and stakeholders to submit their views on the subject.

72. The Special Rapporteur hoped that her next report, due in June 2017, would focus on shelters, protective orders and helplines to raise global awareness of the required standards, as there were no international guidelines. In response to questions from the State of Palestine and Israel, she said that the press release for her report had already been issued and the end-of-mission statement was available on the Special Rapporteur's website. She hoped to participate in a constructive dialogue on the implementation of the recommendations from the report at a later date.

73. Awareness-raising and advocacy should be ongoing and were needed to achieve results in combating violence against women. Her mandate included consideration of all violations of human rights in conflict situations and she would consider that issue in her next report to the Human Rights Council. The role of civil society was crucial, as information from Governments was one-sided. Input from independent human rights institutions and civil society was needed to focus on the real issues, including the fight against extremism. It was also important to address deeply engrained stereotypes.

74. **The Chair** said that, owing to time constraints, the questions posed to the Deputy Executive Director of UN-Women would be answered through the Entity's website.

75. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee) said that the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences (A/71/398) was a slotted document. The submission date had been 25 July, but the text had been received only on 27 September.

76. **Mr. Plasai** (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group supported accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and further measures to close the remaining gaps in 12 critical areas. The international community must collaborate to translate the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into tangible benefits. As a stand-alone Sustainable

Development Goal and a cross-cutting issue in all other Goals, gender equality and women's empowerment required implementation and follow-up at all levels to address the severe and multifaceted challenges that still impeded progress worldwide.

77. Specific actions were needed to further mainstream the gender perspective in the design, implementation and evaluation of public policies. Men and boys should be engaged in the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. He called for gender-responsive budgeting initiatives as well as access to basic health care, quality education and training, and supported the political participation of women and their role in promoting peace and security. Further action must be taken to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls through enhanced mechanisms, legislation and funding.

78. The international community must consider increasing international cooperation and global partnership for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women, including the fulfilment of financial and other commitments. Collective actions were required to remove obstacles to the full realization of the rights of women and girls under foreign occupation. An important factor for the advancement of women was an environment that maintained world peace and promoted and protected human rights, democracy and the peaceful settlement of disputes. There was a need to strengthen efforts to address the multiple forms of discrimination faced by older women, women with disabilities, and migrant, rural and indigenous women and girls.

79. **Mr. Wafy** (Niger), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that the elimination of all forms of violence and exploitation of women and girls would promote their well-being and ensure their full participation in and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life. Violence against women impeded socioeconomic development and the achievement of internationally agreed development goals. States should improve and expand girls' education at all levels and encourage women to enter employment as a means of achieving gender equality, empowering women and developing their self-esteem.

80. The Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union (African Union Assembly) had demonstrated its commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment through the adoption of landmark provisions and statutes allowing the respective Governments to work on advancing the status of women in their countries. In June 2015, the African Union Assembly adopted the "Declaration on 2015 Year of Women's Empowerment and Development towards Africa's Agenda 2063", in which States committed to helping women develop technical and entrepreneurial skills, increasing direct funding, and challenging banks to observe a minimum quota of 50 per cent for women entrepreneurs when providing finance for business expansion.

81. Noting that most detected human trafficking victims were women and girls, he called on the international community to hold traffickers accountable and provide victims with the necessary support. He appealed to all Member States to implement the 2010 United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, and urged the donor community to replenish the Anti-Trafficking Fund.

82. Female genital mutilation and other harmful practices constituted violence against women and girls, and impeded both their empowerment and the achievement of gender equality. States should adopt a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach to tackle the criminal, social, cultural and economic aspects of female genital mutilation.

83. Obstetric fistula had catastrophic effects on the health of women and their children, particularly if left untreated. He called for implementation of the commitments made by the international community to provide official development assistance and technology transfer to help meet the requirements for fistula treatment in Africa.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

United Nations A/C.3/71/SR.8

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Chair: Ms. Mejía Vélez ..... (Colombia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 27: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/71/38, A/71/209, A/71/219, A/71/223, A/71/306 and A/71/398)

1. **Ms. Andujar** (Dominican Republic), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that the States members of CELAC were firmly committed to gender equality and the empowerment of women. While significant progress had been made since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, much remained to be done before those commitments were fulfilled.

2. Sustainable Development Goal 5 was a priority for the Governments of the region. Women and girls should be equal beneficiaries of all sustainable development efforts and their full and active participation in all levels of decision-making must be promoted.

3. CELAC was committed to combating all forms of violence against women, including genital mutilation and forced marriage. Women who suffered multiple forms of discrimination, such as indigenous women, women with disabilities and Afro-descendant women, were particularly vulnerable, and the States members of CELAC had agreed to step up their efforts to combat such discrimination. Particular importance had been accorded to migrant women. Their contributions to development in their countries of origin and destination must be fully recognized and their human rights should be fully respected regardless of their legal status.

4. The Governments of the region had established a working group on the advancement of women, composed of representatives from the region and civil society and supported by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). The group had met in 2014 and 2015 and was due to meet again in the Dominican Republic in November 2016. At the thirteenth Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean to be held in October 2016 in Montevideo, with support from ECLAC and UN-Women, would adopt a strategy to support the implementation of States' commitments on gender equality within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

5. The Commission on the Status of Women had, in the agreed conclusions of its sixtieth session in March 2016, provided a road map on how to implement the 2030 Agenda in a gender-responsive manner. It had also recognized that women were key agents of development and that gender equality and the empowerment of women would be critical to achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Implementation of the 2030 Agenda therefore represented an opportunity for the region to make faster progress towards gender equality. Gender statistics and indicators would be very important for monitoring implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and more dialogue was needed between producers and users.

6. The States members of CELAC would take the necessary measures to ensure the effective fulfilment of their commitments. CELAC recognized the contribution of women's organizations and civil society in placing women's interests and needs on the international agenda and renewed their strong support for the mandate of UN-Women. Lastly, CELAC commended the Secretary-General on his dedication to gender equality and the empowerment of women and hoped that his successor would continue that work.

7. **Mr. Ten-Pow** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that the adoption of Goal 5 had signalled the centrality of gender issues to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

8. Commendable progress had been made to date, but a number of critical concerns remained. The Secretary-General's report on the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls (A/71/219) had noted that domestic violence was one of the more widespread forms of violence against women, while the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime had reported in 2014 that women and girls accounted for 70 per cent of all trafficking victims detected globally.

9. CARICOM Governments remained committed to the empowerment of women and the promotion of gender equality. In 2014, the Council for Human and Social Development of CARICOM had approved a strategy and plan to reduce the number of adolescent

pregnancies in the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean. Almost all CARICOM countries had enacted legislation to protect victims and criminalize acts of physical, psychological and sexual violence.

10. Notwithstanding those advances, multiple challenges lay ahead. The Caribbean Human Development Report for 2016 had noted that violence against women affected between 20 and 25 per cent of women in the CARICOM member States for which data was available. Progress on gender equality in the Caribbean was uneven. Higher numbers of women were completing tertiary education, which had led to an increase in female participation in the workforce in a number of countries, and more women were holding Government positions and elected offices. However, women were more likely to be unemployed, although the gap was narrowing, and tended to be concentrated in poorly paid jobs. Almost half of all households in CARICOM member States were headed by women. The poverty rate among single mothers, older and disabled women remained high and poverty was associated with other vulnerabilities, such as higher infant mortality rates, lower school enrolment and, in some States, high suicide rates.

11. The States members of CARICOM had embraced the goal of a violence-free society and believed that greater access to work opportunities would empower women economically and allow them to leave abusive relationships. Planned migration policies must be implemented to combat irregular migration, which included the trafficking of women. In addition, greater collaboration was needed between Government agencies, civil society and the private sector; advocacy campaigns must address discriminatory attitudes and practices that condoned violence against women; and efforts to engage men and boys in the promotion of gender equality must be strengthened.

12. All sources of financing must be harnessed to ensure that adequate resources were available to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and official development assistance would continue to play a pivotal role in promoting gender equality. The States members of CARICOM therefore called on developed countries to fulfil their commitments under the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and to ensure adequate, regular and predictable resources to enable the United Nations system, and UN-Women in particular, to discharge their mandates.

13. CARICOM reaffirmed its commitment to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular those related to the advancement of women and girls. The 2030 Agenda represented a tremendous opportunity to make a difference in the lives of the most vulnerable, who were at the greatest risk of being left behind.

14. **Mr. Ibrahim** (Malaysia), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that the pursuit of gender equality was one of the fundamental goals of ASEAN. It had demonstrated its commitment to gender equality through the establishment of its Committee on Women and its declarations on the advancement of women and the elimination of violence against women, adopted in 1998 and 2004, respectively. The 2016-2020 work plan of the Committee on Women aimed to further promote women's rights and incorporated elements of the ASEAN Charter and the Roadmap for an ASEAN Community 2009-2015. Input had also been received from the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights and the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children.

15. A declaration on the elimination of violence against women and children had been adopted in 2013, and regional plans of action for its implementation were being developed. Among other activities, a network of social services agencies involved in protecting and assisting the victims of violence was being launched; action had been taken to incorporate a gender perspective into different areas of development, including two regional events on gender and climate change in 2015; and a gender-sensitive guideline to improve the handling of women and girl victims of human trafficking was being finalized.

16. The ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children had continued to work with United Nations agencies. A third interface dialogue had been held with the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Violence against Children at its February 2016 meeting, and a statement had been issued supporting the High Time to End Violence against Children initiative. In addition, a regional training

session on integrating gender perspectives in national social protection policies had been held in Manila in June 2015.

17. Steadfast support from ASEAN members had led to increased economic empowerment of women in the region. Various national and regional mechanisms, such as ASEAN Women Parliamentarians and ASEAN Women's Circle, were working to advance women's causes and their participation across all sectors. ASEAN was committed to ensuring that the goal of gender equality remained an integral part of its policies and programmes and the development of its Community. It looked forward to working with the United Nations and other partners on building a more prosperous and inclusive global community, in which women played an integral role in socioeconomic development. Given that women were key agents of change and development, their well-being and empowerment would contribute significantly to implementation of the 2030 Agenda. ASEAN therefore looked forward to exploring all possible forms of collaboration with the United Nations and other partners to support the advancement of women in the region.

18. **Ms. Adamson** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area; and, in addition, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that unprecedented levels of human mobility in 2016 were presenting serious challenges. Migration placed women and children at greater risk of sexual violence and abuse; the international community must take a gender-based approach to migration to meet the specific protection needs of women and girls on the move and fulfil the commitment made by the General Assembly in its New York Declaration of 19 September 2016. The European Union was stepping up its efforts to ensure that women and girls had access to medical care, legal support and psycho-social care during the asylum process.

19. All European Union-funded humanitarian aid operations were required to be gender- and age-sensitive, and to ensure effective implementation of its humanitarian gender policy, the European Union had invested in capacity-building and tools, such as its Gender-Age Marker. With regard to the creation of the European Union Facility for Refugees in Turkey and other measures taken in Jordan and Lebanon, projects were based on gender-sensitive needs assessments, and the impact on women and girls was monitored. Implementing partners must ensure that actions benefited women and girls as well and men and boys. The €1.8 billion Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa was designed to promote gender equality at the grass-roots level and protect women and girls along migration routes. Reducing gender inequality would help prevent further violence.

20. Beyond migration, the European Union was strongly committed to supporting implementation of the 2030 Agenda and had strong frameworks in place to help its partner countries achieve tangible results in their pursuit of gender equality. Action would be taken in four priority areas: ensuring the physical and psychological integrity of girls and women; promoting their economic, social and cultural rights; strengthening their political and civil rights; and shifting the institutional culture of the European Union, so that it could deliver more effectively on its commitments.

21. Governments bore the primary responsibility for implementing the commitments made but the European Union welcomed the ongoing dialogue on collective lessons learned and the outstanding gaps and challenges for gender equality and gender mainstreaming within the United Nations system.

22. With regard to implementation of the Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security, the newly adopted Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy had placed special emphasis on the prevention of all forms of gender-based violence and on the participation of women in peace processes and the prevention of conflict. Implementation of the strategy had involved continuing to support the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict; allocating over €11 million of the European Union's humanitarian aid to addressing sexual and gender-based violence in 2015; working on the gender dimension of terrorism and violent

extremism; and strengthening networks and partnerships.

23. Despite recent progress, no country had yet achieved full gender equality. The European Union looked forward to engaging with its partners to ensure that the resolutions adopted within the framework of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly on gender equality, women's rights and the empowerment of women were as robust as possible.

24. **Ms. Owens** (United States of America) said that her Government sought to advance the rights and status of women and girls, promote gender equality in its foreign policy and combat gender-based violence. It was also working to combat the harmful practice of female genital mutilation and to address obstetric fistula through promoting sexual and reproductive health rights, including increased access to skilled birth attendance and preventing adolescent pregnancy.

25. The United States partnered with Governments around the world to combat human trafficking in all its forms and had awarded over $ 18 million in grants to combat that hidden crime. Given the risks faced by stateless persons, especially women and children, and the historic numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons in the world, women must have the right to confer citizenship on their children and spouses. Her delegation had sponsored Human Rights Council resolution 32/7, which sought to eliminate discrimination against women in that area. She noted with satisfaction that the recently-adopted New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants acknowledged the need to reduce statelessness to prevent and address forced displacement.

26. **Ms. Abdelkawy** (Egypt) said that in 2016, Egypt had begun implementation of a national strategy to combat violence against women. That strategy's methodology focused on four areas: prevention, protection, victims' services and prosecution, and a report was being drafted in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund to determine the extent of the phenomenon and its economic costs. At the beginning of the previous week, the National Council for Women had launched the second phase of a campaign to support and empower Egyptian women and to challenge stereotypes about them. The campaign also addressed the issue of sexual harassment and women's economic and political empowerment. The Council's legislative committee, in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice and the United Nations Development Programme, had prepared a draft law on combating violence against women that was expected to be discussed in the parliament.

27. Egypt stressed that the custom of female genital mutilation was in no way whatsoever connected with Islam or any of the divinely revealed religions. Rather, it was a form of violence against women and must be utterly eradicated. To that end, the Egyptian cabinet had endorsed a draft law imposing harsher penalties for anyone performing it and reclassifying it from a misdemeanour to a felony. The Egyptian National Population Council, in cooperation with the United Nations, had conducted training for police, prosecutors, judges and forensic experts in matters related to female genital mutilation, and the country had formulated medical guidelines to address gender-based violence, including female genital mutilation. Those guidelines provided that services be made available to victims and that perpetrators be reported and held accountable.

28. Women's participation in parliament had increased to 15 per cent, a figure which also included women with disabilities. The quota for women in local government had reached 25 per cent. There were currently 66 women judges, and the number of women in the diplomatic corps and at Egyptian embassies had been increasing every year.

29. **Ms. Sandoval** (Paraguay) said that the Constitution of Paraguay guaranteed equality between women and men, and her Government was working to make that provision a reality. The third national equal opportunity plan, the principal instrument for mainstreaming the gender perspective in public policies, was designed to break with the historical and cultural imbalance between women and men in society. The Public Policies for Rural Women Act sought to guarantee the rights of, and empower, rural women. Conditional monetary transfer programmes that prioritized female heads of household were being implemented to overcome the intergenerational transmission of poverty. Laws had also been enacted to promote breastfeeding and to protect domestic workers and caregivers. A bill for the comprehensive protection of women against all forms of violence, containing a

legal definition of the crime of femicide, had already received partial approval.

30. **Ms. Al Fassam** (Kuwait) said that Kuwait shared the view that States must step up their efforts to prevent violence against women and, in cooperation with the relevant United Nations organizations, should engage in further research regarding the connection between migration and human trafficking, with a view to developing procedures that took age and sex into account in addressing the vulnerability experienced by migrant women and girls in situations of armed conflict and natural disasters.

31. The Kuwaiti constitution affirmed that all people were equal in terms of dignity and shared equal rights and duties in the eyes of the law. In line with the recommendations of the Secretariat, Kuwait had taken a number of measures to advance of women and protect their rights, such as recognition of the principle of equal wages for men and women in the private sector, and the inclusion of women in the judiciary and the military. Targets related to women's empowerment were part of the development agenda of Kuwait for 2019-2020. Among those targets was the elimination of discrimination against women through formation of a committee to review existing legislation and propose amendments that would bring about equality between the sexes.

32. Kuwait encouraged education for women and girls. A higher percentage of women than men were enrolled in educational institutions, with women accounting for 52 per cent of regular education students and 66 per cent of higher education students. Kuwaiti women received special attention in the area of health care, as the State had enacted legislation making pre-marital medical screening mandatory and had provided opportunities for girls to be vaccinated against cancer. Kuwait had granted working mothers a number of rights, including generous maternity and post-delivery leave. Kuwait's commitment to women's empowerment was reflected in its ratification of a number of relevant international instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

33. **Mr. Sauer** (Finland) said that violence against women and girls was a waste of human potential and seriously undermined the development of entire societies. Discrimination and violence must not be allowed to undermine efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. In order to make progress on the issue, the gender stereotypes surrounding masculinity must also be addressed and men and boys must become part of the solution. Women's participation in development unlocked the potential for economic growth. Finland had benefited from ensuring women's equal political rights, the right to education, work and social protection, to own and inherit property as well as to sexual and reproductive health and rights. Freedom to make decisions over their own bodies was crucial for ensuring the health, well-being and empowerment of women.

34. The sixth Global Forum on Gender Statistics, currently being organized in Helsinki in conjunction with the United Nations Statistics Division, would focus on data and statistical methods for the follow-up and review of the Sustainable Development Goal indicators from a gender perspective. It would also reflect on different methods of producing, analysing and using data to measure and monitor women's economic empowerment and other gender issues. Statistics Finland had worked with the National Police Board of Finland to improve data concerning violent offences and violence against women. For instance, the 2016 edition of *Women and Men in Finland* contained detailed, gender-specific statistics on victims of crimes and on the use of shelters. A 2014 study on labour discrimination examined gender-based discrimination and unequal treatment.

35. **Mr. Heinzer** (Switzerland) said that the prevention of violence against women had been incorporated into his country's international cooperation programme, legislative programme and national sustainable development strategy, and the issue of sexual and gender-based violence had been included as a priority in its humanitarian assistance strategy.

36. Noting with concern the figures on obstetric fistula contained in the report of the Secretary-General on intensifying efforts to end obstetric fistula (A/71/306*), he said that not only young and adolescent girls but also their families must be better informed as to the risks involved in early pregnancy and childbirth. Greater investment in health-care systems was needed to guarantee rapid access to high-quality obstetric and neonatal care. Men and boys and

the younger generation as a whole should be mobilized to support the elimination of female genital mutilation as they would be able to challenge the deeply rooted inequalities and social norms that perpetuated that harmful practice.

37. Member States had a duty to step up their efforts to promote partnerships and better coordinate initiatives to eliminate violence and ensure that the rights of women were fulfilled. The voices of young men and women must be heard.

38. **Mr. Yesod** (Israel) said that Israel strove for a world in which everyone was treated fairly, in which gender equality was a given and in which women would be successful in winning their rights. The paralysing fear of violence, female genital mutilation, child marriages and other horrific acts must not be allowed to control societies. Men and boys must be educated about gender equality. Women, for their part, should not be denied an education while their male counterparts were in school. Higher economic growth could be attained through the education of women and girls. The labour market needed to open up and integrate women fully and equally, especially in leadership positions, whether in the public or the private sector or as presidents, prime ministers or senior United Nations officials. It was not a matter of strengthening women, for they were already strong, but rather of changing the world's perception of that strength.

39. **Mr. Lambertini** (Italy) said that women's issues were deeply intertwined with every aspect of development, health, social equity and the enjoyment of human rights. The full social, economic and political empowerment of women was not just a moral imperative and a matter of justice but also a multiplier of well-being and development for societies. Italy was at the forefront of international multilateral action to end harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and forced or child marriage and was committed to working with partner countries and all concerned stakeholders to prevent violations of the human rights of women.

40. The issue of sexual violence must be given the centrality it deserved along with the economic and political empowerment of women. Italy was committed to preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based crimes in situations of conflict. Women put their lives and those of their children at risk when fleeing conflict in their countries in search of a better future. The enormous challenges still persisting underscored the need to focus not only on the symptoms but also on the structural causes of gender-based violence and discrimination.

41. **Mr. Thinkeomeuangneua** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that his country had a series of laws and institutions to protect women's interests and further their advancement. The Lao National Commission for the Advancement of women, established in 2003, assisted the Government in formulating national policy and strategy to promote women's advancement and acted as the focal point for gender equality and the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. Under its guidance, the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women 2011-2015 had been adopted and workshops and seminars had been organized on gender issues.

42. Another organization, the Lao Women's Union, had established five-year plans to promote gender equality, protect women's rights and monitor implementation of Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Development Plan for Lao Women was established to promote legal awareness among women, improve their education, skills, health and nutrition and create income-generating opportunities. The Government attached great importance to fulfilment of the major international instruments relating to the advancement of women and, as a result, gender parity had improved steadily at all levels.

43. **Mr. Joshi** (India) said that India had successfully integrated gender mainstreaming into its governance system. The National Policy for Women was being updated to establish a solid foundation to accelerate the commitment to fulfilment of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda. Various financial inclusion, micro-credit and income-generation policies and programmes had been launched with women as the main beneficiaries. A landmark achievement enabled women to participate in political decision-making through a quota of one-third of seats reserved for women, and in many states, half of the seats in local and urban self-government entities were also reserved for women. More than 1.5 million

women participated in decision-making at the local level.

44. India had achieved gender parity in primary education and important programmes had been launched to change the mindset and remove the centuries-old bias in the society. Direct cash benefits, incentive schemes and other health programmes were aimed at reducing maternal and child mortality rates. Maternity leave had been increased to 26 weeks and that change was expected to reduce infant mortality rates. National legislation on trafficking was being brought in line with international commitments.

45. **Mr. Morităn** (Argentina) said that his country placed special emphasis on the empowerment of women who were subjected to violence and experienced multiple forms of discrimination. Older women suffered from discriminatory laws and practices and their situation was cause for concern. Pursuant to a State policy for the eradication of all forms of violence against women, Argentina was implementing its first national preventative action plan to assist women at risk.

46. Convinced that national efforts to achieve gender equality should be reflected in similar efforts within the United Nations, members of his Government had signed the Gqual Declaration and joined the campaign for the promotion of gender parity in international tribunals and other bodies. He commended Spain on the establishment of a network of focal points on the issue of women, peace and security. The focal point designated by his Government would help to further that initiative.

47. The Government of Argentina gave priority attention to the prevention and punishment of the crime of trafficking in persons and sought to improve its capacity to assist and protect victims. Mechanisms should be set up to provide free legal counsel for victims.

48. **Ms. Zaizar** (Mexico) said that generation after generation had grown up with the idea that the objectification of women was natural, the roles of men and women in society were pre-established, and gender violence was normalized, even in a century of technology and globalization. The impact of social media, however, could be used to combat gender-based violence, if women were given the opportunity to demonstrate their competence and capacity for leadership on a daily basis. Failing that, the injustices of the past would be perpetuated.

49. In 2015, her Government had adopted the National Strategy for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention, which aimed to halve the adolescent fertility rate and to prevent pregnancy in girls under the age of 14. She also welcomed the efforts by Latin American countries to draw up a joint strategy and was confident that the outcome of the forthcoming Regional Conference of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean would contribute to the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda.

50. Countries must improve their production of disaggregated gender-based statistics. As a leader in that area and in conjunction with UN-Women, Mexico would shortly be establishing a centre for excellence on statistics from a gender perspective, whose overall objective would be to facilitate accountability mechanisms and provide guidelines for the establishment of laws and public policies.

51. Conscious of the multidimensional discrimination, socioeconomic inequality and exclusion from political power faced by women in Mexico, the Government had taken up the challenge to address the underlying causes of the obstacles to the advancement of the rights of women. She called on States to continue to deepen their political commitments with a view to the collective achievement of Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

52. **Mr. Ruiz Blanco** (Colombia) said that his country had built a robust legal and policy framework for promoting women in all areas of State activity, in keeping with international agreements, national legislation and the requests of women's movements and civil society. In its approach to tackling violence against women, Colombia focused on three aspects: prevention, care and coordination. The focus on prevention ensured gender mainstreaming in all policies pertaining to violence against women; the care dimension related to the improvement of relevant health-care and judicial services; and the coordination dimension emphasized better interaction between national bodies, the tightening of legislation and improved data and follow-up.

53. In 2015, his Government had approved one law criminalizing femicide and another increasing penalties for attacks perpetrated using chemical agents and stripping the aggressors of certain legal benefits.

54. Colombia had experienced the advantages of women's involvement in peacebuilding first hand, since almost one third of the negotiators in the peace talks between the Government and Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) had been women. That process demonstrated the Government's commitment to women and its awareness that women had suffered the most in the country's armed conflict. It was crucial for women to continue to play a prominent role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts.

55. **Ms. Rodríguez Abascal** (Cuba) said that progress in the advancement of women had been fragile and insufficient. Women accounted for some 75 per cent of refugees and displaced persons, 70 per cent of the poor and two thirds of illiterate adults. Over 300,000 women died each year from avoidable complications during childbirth.

56. Cuba had been the first country to sign the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Cuban women now enjoyed equal conditions to men: they received the same salary for work of equal value; were entitled to draw benefits if they became widowed, had disabilities or gave birth; could own land; take out loans; and access high-quality free educational and health services. Sexual and reproductive rights, including the right to abortion and freedom to choose the number and spacing of children, were guaranteed.

57. Efforts to improve the sharing of the care burden within the family and to increase the presence of women in high-level government positions were ongoing. Unemployment of women currently stood at 3.5 per cent, with women accounting for 48 per cent of the civil service (where they held 47 per cent of senior management posts) and almost 49 per cent of the members of parliament.

58. The elimination of violence against women, however, required the elimination of all unilateral coercive measures. The economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on Cuba was a form of violence inflicted on Cuban women and girls and an obstacle to their advancement.

59. **Ms. Sukacheva** (Russian Federation) said that gender equality and the advancement of women remained as relevant as ever in the face of a turbulent global economy and an unstable political environment. Although much had been achieved since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, no country had entirely eradicated violence against women and girls.

60. The Commission on the Status of Women should continue to be the main coordinating body in the United Nations system for gender issues and the forum for constructive dialogue between Member States. The Russian Federation had stepped up its efforts to form a comprehensive policy on women's issues in recent years and was currently drawing up a national strategy in that regard. The strategy focused on boosting women's involvement in political life and decision-making, including by imposing quotas on political parties; enhancing the economic situation of women through incentives to women entrepreneurs; improving women's health care; preventing violence against women; and overhauling gender stereotypes.

61. The Russian Federation was constantly enhancing its partnerships on gender-related issues and had held successful consultations at events involving the Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (BRICS) group, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation and the Women in Parliaments Global Forum. Russian non-governmental organizations were also collaborating more intensively with their foreign counterparts, as exemplified by the General Assembly of the European Centre of the International Council of Women in Moscow, which had involved representatives from 20 countries. Following the success of the Eurasian Women's Forum held in Saint Petersburg in September 2015, a decision had also been taken to make the forum an annual event.

62. **Mr. Coloma Grimberg** (Chile) said that his Government attached utmost importance to the eradication of violence against women in all its forms. Statistics on violence against women provided by Member States during the current debate were alarming. In order to tackle the problem, Governments required reliable data so as to tailor their policies and laws to the specific situation in their country and subsequently needed the resolve to apply those laws

effectively. Chile was confronting that scourge with determination and, in 2014, had included a specific line on the prevention of violence against women in its national budget for the first time. The training of monitors, public awareness campaigns and education no the topic from school age onwards were important methods for preventing such violence.

63. His country was particularly concerned by cases of extreme violence against women, such as femicide, forced marriage and female genital mutilation. Regular information should be disseminated on such practices so that the public could be made aware of the gravity of the problem and of the importance of stopping it. Given that Chile was ranked among the 25 countries worldwide with the highest rates of femicide, his Government was grateful that the Special Rapporteur on violence against women had placed new emphasis on that dimension and looked forward to cooperating with her office.

64. **Mr. Raja Zaib Shah** (Malaysia) said that his Government had made efforts to involve women more effectively in Malaysia's economic and social development and had set targets of increasing the labour participation rate from 54 to 59 per cent by 2020. His country had already achieved its target of increasing the number of women in decision-making positions in the public sector to 35 per cent in 2015, while the corporate world was following suit and progressing towards its goal of 30 per cent. A council had been established to advise the Government on the empowerment of women and ensure that specific policies and legislation were formulated for the advancement of women.

65. The Government was keenly aware of the social and economic problems facing single mothers, particularly in rural areas. In 2015, it had launched a national action plan to offer them training and entrepreneurship opportunities and thereby improve their access to the job market. Programmes had also been run across the country to increase legal literacy among communities and ensure that victims of violence received holistic support and assistance.

66. **Ms. Salim** (Libya) said that it was worrying that women still experienced discrimination based on negative stereotypes which made women one of the most vulnerable and marginalized social groups. They were victims of human trafficking and domestic and sexual violence, particularly in armed conflict and in post-conflict situations. Despite the security, political and economic challenges faced by Libya, the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord was committed to defending women's rights and reaffirmed its obligations under the relevant regional and international instruments to which Libya was a party. Libya also stressed that measures should be adopted to ensure accountability and to prevent impunity.

67. Equality between the sexes in Libya was enshrined in law and guaranteed pursuant to the Constitutional Declaration of 2011. National legislation also guaranteed women's rights such as the right to education, the right to health care, the right to hold property and pursue economic activities, the right to political participation and the right to make decisions without being subject to sexual discrimination. Nevertheless, the participation of Libyan women in many spheres fell short of aspirations, which was understandable given Libya's circumstances, but still unacceptable, and thus the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord had issued decision No. 210 of 2016 establishing a unit to support and empower women, which was a crucial step toward giving women a larger role in political life. Libyan women had had an effective role in establishing and managing civil society organizations and had taken part in raising awareness of the rights of women contained in national laws.

68. **Ms. Salazar** (Peru), speaking as a youth delegate, reaffirmed the importance of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the progress reports on the implementation of commitments adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women. Although Goal 5 of the 2030 Agenda specifically called for countries to join forces to end all forms of discrimination against women and girls and eliminate all gender-based violence, including early and forced marriage, gender equality was a component of every Sustainable Development Goal and was reflected in all of Peru's national initiatives to empower women and achieve social inclusion.

69. Peru's national gender equality plan for 2012-2017 aimed to mainstream the gender perspective at all levels of public administration and guarantee equality,

effective protection of human rights, non-discrimination and the full realization of individual and collective capacities. The national plan against gender violence 2016-2021 focused on initiatives to change sociocultural patterns in power and hierarchical structures which legitimated gender violence. The Government had also agreed to introduce mechanisms to empower women politically, by guaranteeing them seats in elections, and economically, by promoting their inclusion in Government social programmes.

70. The current Government of Peru aspired to bring about a social revolution, putting an end to gender inequality and ensuring that all men and women were entitled to full citizenship and physical, political and economic freedom. Gender equality and the rights of women and children were crucial in the path towards sustainable development. The Sustainable Development Goals must be achieved by 2030 and no later.

71. **Ms. Alsuwaidi** (United Arab Emirates) said that her country had sought to improve and strengthen national policies and legislation aimed at raising the status of women in society. A recent measure adopted by the Government in that regard was the increase of the number of women in leadership positions, including government positions. The Women's General Union and the Gender Balance Council was amending current national strategies and formulating new policies to empower women in line with the United Arab Emirates Vision 2021 and international standards. The Gender Balance Council had also created a committee to review the law on post-delivery leave and maternity leave.

72. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had welcomed measures adopted by the United Arab Emirates to combat violence against women, including amendments to the federal law against human trafficking designed to provide increased protection to victims of such trafficking.

73. The United Arab Emirates had contributed to women's economic empowerment globally through its membership in the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment. The work of that panel was based on the conviction that women's economic empowerment was the cornerstone of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The United Arab Emirates was also a strong supporter of the Every Woman Every Child Everywhere initiative to reduce maternal and infant mortality, as over 50per cent of such fatalities took place in fragile humanitarian situations and were thus preventable. The United Arab Emirates had supported this initiative by joining the Secretary-General's Every Woman Every Child high-level advisory group.

74. **Mr. Nguyen** Duy Thanh (Viet Nam) said that women had played an essential role throughout Viet Nam's history and were a driving force of its economic and social development. They accounted for almost half of the labour force and a quarter of business leaders. They actively participated in policy-making and legislative processes, with many in senior leadership positions, including the newly-elected chairperson of the National Assembly. School enrolment rates for boys and girls were almost equal and the gender wage gap was gradually narrowing, in line with international standards. Viet Nam was working closely with international partners to improve gender mainstreaming and had helped to organize an international seminar on educating women and girls in preventing and combating trafficking in persons during the thirty-third session of the Human Rights Council.

75. Despite the progress made, the country still faced challenges to counter the effects of climate change and natural disasters. Since late 2015, Viet Nam had been beset by a serious drought in the central highlands and the Mekong Delta region, hampering access to clean water and sanitation and threatening the livelihoods of at least two million people, mostly women and girls.

76. **Ms. Moutchou** (Morocco) said that her country was staunchly committed to promoting the emancipation of women and gender equality and had made structural reforms to strengthen the role of the family. The revision of the Family Code had promoted the role of women within the family and society. The new Moroccan Constitution explicitly highlighted gender equality and called for the establishment of a supreme authority responsible for promoting equality and combating discrimination. Morocco recognized the primacy of international law over domestic law and the Government had ratified and lifted its reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol. It had also recast various provisions in

domestic law that violated women's rights or discriminated against them.

77. The growing participation of women in decision-making roles in parliament, the Government and the judiciary was proof of Morocco's political will. Women had won one third of the seats during municipal and regional elections in 2015 and reforms had mandated the inclusion of as many women as men on the ballot for elections to the upper house of parliament. Morocco had also incorporated human rights instruction into curriculums and created university posts for the study of human rights and the cultivation of peace. Civil society was increasingly active in lobbying for women's rights in Morocco.

78. The experiment of results-driven gender-sensitive budgets, as supported by UN-Women, had generated more data for evaluating the gender aspect of public policies and the practice had now been rolled out at the regional and international levels.

79. **Mr. Patriota** (Brazil) said that the agreed conclusions of the sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women held in March 2016 was the first intergovernmental document since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda to elaborate on how the gender perspective of the 2030 Agenda should be applied. The Human Rights Council had expanded further on that topic in resolution A/HRC/32/L.25. His delegation was also committed to mainstreaming and accelerating the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. All three documents contributed enormously to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

80. Brazil had implemented several key initiatives in recent decades to advance the rights and economic and political empowerment of women, including regulations on domestic work to enhance women's access to decent employment, measures to redistribute income to women and an entrepreneurship scheme to improve access of women to the formal economy. In many countries, the number of women in the labour force had been adversely affected by the unaffordable cost of care services, scant provisions for parental paid leave and a lack of financial support for families with children. As the self-regulating market appeared to accentuate discrimination, Member States should consider how to encourage the private sector to assume greater responsibility for boosting women's participation in the labour market.

81. **Ms. Owino** (Kenya) said that her Government was committed to achieving its goal of gender equality and the empowerment of women, and recognized the link between that goal and sustainable development. Political, civil, social and economic rights and freedom from discrimination were enshrined in the Kenyan Constitution, while the national development blueprint, Vision 2030, underscored the importance of gender mainstreaming, women's empowerment in sustainable development and gender equity in resource distribution and power. The Government had enacted numerous policies to promote women's rights, including legislation on domestic violence, female genital mutilation, sexual offences, employment, trafficking, marriage and gender-based violence.

82. A board tasked with reducing rates of female genital mutilation had overseen a 17 per cent drop in its prevalence between 2008 and 20[illegible]nd a campaign to end child marriages in Africa would soon be launched. Since starting to offer free education, Kenya had achieved near gender parity in primary and secondary schools and the construction of boarding schools in nomadic communities, the provision of sanitary towels and the prohibition of child marriage had increased transition rates of girls from primary to secondary school. The Government had also earmarked $43 million to the provision of maternity services, resulting in a 17 per cent increase in deliveries at health facilities since mid-2013. Lastly, gender equality in the political sphere had improved significantly, with women accounting for a quarter of all members of parliament and over 40 per cent of the judiciary.

83. **Ms. Mainali** (Nepal) said that Nepal's constitution, adopted in September 2015, guaranteed that 33 per cent of parliamentary seats would be held by women, with a balance between men and women at the top positions. The Constitution also stipulated that persons of the same gender or community could not occupy both the offices of the president and the vice-president at the same time, and ensured freedom from all forms of exploitation and equal rights in family and property matters.

84. Nepal was a party to a number of human rights instruments, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against

Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and had been implementing national plans of action in that regard. Nepal had been the first South Asian country to develop a national plan of action on Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008). The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was yet another platform for addressing the advancement of women, and the Government of Nepal had prepared a preliminary national report on sustainable development goals with a view to integrating the 2030 Agenda into its national plans, including Goal 5.

85. Nepal was committed to eliminating gender-based violence, discrimination and exclusion, as well as trafficking in women and girls. In 2010, a unit had been created under the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers to combat gender-based violence, which was tasked with monitoring complaints of gender-based violence and subsequent government action. Nepal had also been implementing a national strategy on gender-based violence since 2012.

86. **Mr. Pedersen** (Norway) said that it was a sad fact that in all societies, girls were subjected to sexual harassment and sometimes violence, and that in some countries they were denied access to abortion in cases of pregnancy due to rape. Child marriage and forced marriage were violence and abuse, and it was unacceptable that the tradition was still widespread in 2016 and that religion and "traditional values" were used as an excuse to deprive girls of their rights. All forms of violence against women, including intimate partner violence, marital rape, trafficking in women and female genital mutilation, must be eradicated, and men must be involved in that effort, especially men with the power to influence change in gender norms.

87. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was ambitious, and the resources and talents of women must be utilized in order for the Sustainable Development Goals to succeed, in the form of equal access to education, jobs, property and decision-making. Education in particular was fundamental to sustainable development and crucial in order for women to hold political and economic positions, and for that reason, Norway had made education a top priority in its development cooperation. The most difficult job remained: reaching the most marginalized women — poor, rural, minority or disabled women — who had not been part of the progress which had taken place in health and education over the past 15 years.

88. **Mr. Qassem Agha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that since the 1920s, Syrian constitutions and laws had promoted and empowered Syrian women and endowed them with all rights to make them fully equal with men in all aspects of political, economic and cultural life, and their achievements had surpassed those of their counterparts in the region. In 1948, Syria had been the first Arab country to give women the right to vote in parliamentary elections and in 1973, the first woman parliamentarian had been elected, and 2016 had seen the appointment of the first woman speaker of parliament. A woman occupied the role of vice president of the republic, and others worked as pilots and ambassadors.

89. The previous five years had been difficult ones, with Syrian women bearing the brunt of the most heinous forms of terrorism and extremism. Many had been killed by terrorists for the mere offence of having a Facebook account. Others had chosen suicide as an alternative to forced marriage or rape by terrorists, and hundreds of Syrian girls had been kidnapped from their homes, in front of their families, and forced into slavery and sold at auctions held by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the Nusrah Front. That was in addition to the abysmal conditions endured by Syrian women in camps on the borders of neighbouring countries, and the ships of death crammed with thousands of Syrian women on the Mediterranean, which had become a source of income for terrorist Turkish mafias. Palestinian and Syrian women were still suffering in Palestine and the occupied Syrian Golan as a result of the stifling Israeli occupation. Had the time not come for the countries involved in the war to stop supporting terrorism in Syria so that hope and security could be restored? Was it not incumbent upon all to implement Security Council resolutions 2170 (2014) and 2178 (2014)?

90. **Ms. Zahir** (Maldives) said that despite the pursuit of a world in which girls and women were able to fully enjoy their human rights, they continued to be subject to gender-based violence, faced barriers in access to education, and were disproportionately affected by global conflicts. The Government of the Maldives believed that with additional resources,

determination and innovation, progress could be accelerated. To that end, the Maldives had formulated an inclusive education policy that guaranteed equal access to education for all girls. In 2015, 55 per cent of all high school graduates had been girls. That same inclusivity extended to the workplace: under the Employment Act, women and men were guaranteed equal access to employment and equal pay for equal work. The Act also outlawed the use of sex or marital status as a basis for dismissal, and included generous maternity leave provisions.

91. Women remained underrepresented in the political and economic spheres, although progress had been made. The Government had recently enacted the groundbreaking Gender Equality Act, which sought to ensure gender equality in all spheres of society and give full effect to the equal rights guaranteed by the constitution. The Act required the State and political parties to ensure that equal opportunities existed for women to participate at all levels of political life, and also contained provisions that strengthened victims' defences against perpetrators of sexual violence. Other stringent laws and policies that had been put in place by the Maldives to prevent violence against women and girls included the Sexual Harassment and Prevention Act, and the Maldives had criminalized marital rape since 2014.

92. **Ms. Nescher** (Principality of Liechtenstein) said that there was growing evidence that women's political participation improved decision-making processes. The participation of women in parliaments had broadened agendas, resulting, for example, in better childcare policies or the successful implementation of drinking water projects. Women's access to higher education and higher female labour-force participation enhanced economic growth. Admittedly, structural gender inequalities were aggravated in times of conflict and women were exposed, in those situations, to even worse violence; however, that did not define women. Indeed, they were powerful agents of change for ensuring sustainable peace in the aftermath. All those involved in current peace processes, in particular in Syria, should make gender equality and women's empowerment a priority.

93. Gender equality started with the understanding that women were equal partners in every aspect of life. Yet even within the United Nations, a clear gender imbalance could be seen. She looked forward to seeing more women represented in senior positions in the Organization.

94. **Ms. Dantuono** (Observer for the Holy See) said that it was alarming that 35 per cent of women worldwide had experienced physical violence at some point in their lives. The Pope had condemned all forms of violence against women as unacceptable, in particular domestic violence. Violence in the family often extended into the economic, political, social and cultural spheres and led to women being deprived of economic resources and unable to exercise their rights to participation.

95. The promotion of inclusive and equitable economies would have a profound impact on the advancement of women in a world where women bore the brunt of poverty. The Pope had noted that women who endured exclusion, mistreatment and violence were less able to defend their rights yet often displayed heroism in the way they protected their families.

96. The Holy See supported the Secretary-General's recommendations regarding female genital mutilation. Many Catholic institutions were working to change cultural practices and empower young women to resist such violence. Human trafficking and other forms of modern-day slavery were also top priorities for the Holy See; slavery ran counter to all the principles that the United Nations stood for and the international community must fight it in all its forms.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

United Nations A/C.3/71/SR.9

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Chair: Ms. Mejía Vélez ..... (Colombia)

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Agenda item 27: Advancement of women (*continued*)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 27: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/71/38, A/71/209, A/71/219, A/71/223, A/71/306 and A/71/398)

1. **Mr. Mnisi** (Swaziland), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that the States members of the Southern African Development Community were committed to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. To that end, SADC had adopted various strategies and plans, including a comprehensive protocol on gender and development, which was being reviewed to bring it into line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. While the protocol represented a significant step forward for the subregion, its implementation depended on an enabling institutional environment. SADC had developed data collection tools and a monitoring, evaluation and reporting matrix in order to assess progress made in implementing the protocol.

2. At the regional level, SADC was also committed to achieving Agenda 2063, of which gender equality was a significant focus, and had been involved in the development of the African Gender Scorecard. It was also at the initial stage of developing a regional multidimensional women's economic empowerment programme, as economic empowerment was essential for achieving gender equality.

3. Noting that Southern Africa had been severely affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, he said that SADC had adopted a strategic framework on the issue and formulated a number of policies to combat the epidemic, including both medical interventions and initiatives aimed at changing people's behaviour. In addition, in recognition that socioeconomic conditions played a role in the epidemic, SADC had committed itself to raising awareness; widening access to care, testing and counselling; accelerating development; intensifying resource mobilization; and strengthening institutional, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Particular attention must be paid to addressing gender imbalances, the vulnerability of girls and harmful practices, as women accounted for the majority of HIV infections.

4. Despite some progress, gender inequality remained one of the biggest challenges facing Southern Africa, with lack of access to and ownership of resources, gender-based violence, trafficking and inadequate social investment sources of particular concern.

5. **Mr. Oña Garcés** (Ecuador) said that the concept of "buen vivir" or "sumac kawsay", an alternative development pathway, had come to guide the country's policies, including its commitment to ensuring gender equality and non-discrimination.

6. Over the previous nine years, women's political participation had increased. Women occupied key positions in the National Assembly, the Court of Justice and the Cabinet, where they held strategic portfolios such as justice and human rights, economic and social inclusion, development, health, urban development and housing, and planning. The Government had mainstreamed the issue of gender into national strategies; established a council on gender equality to support the development of policies and laws aimed at empowering women; and adopted a national agenda on women and gender equality, which included proposals for cross-cutting policies and affirmative action.

7. In addition, the National Assembly had passed laws specifically criminalizing femicide and giving unpaid domestic workers social security and pension rights. The Government was also tackling the issue of gender-based violence through legislative change, awareness-raising campaigns and the creation of shelters and specialized judicial units, with a view to improving women's access to justice and advancing their economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights. Such progress could not have been achieved without the efforts of women across Ecuador.

8. He welcomed the introduction of a stand-alone goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the Sustainable Development Goals, as sustainable development could not be achieved by 2030 without ensuring their empowerment; real political will was needed in order to bring about radical change, however.

9. **Ms. Jayawardene** (Sri Lanka) said that over the previous three decades, the social and economic conditions of women in Sri Lanka had improved considerably: 97 per cent of Sri Lankan girls completed their primary education; female students

dominated in the fields of law, medicine, finance and teaching; access to health-care facilities for women had greatly improved; and the maternal mortality ratio had been halved since 1998.

10. To further promote the empowerment of women, the Government was focusing on three priority areas, the first of which was women's economic enhancement. Changing demographics meant that the country's economic development was increasingly dependent on female workers, including women living in rural areas, a group that the Government was trying to reach through rural development projects.

11. The second priority area was the elimination of violence against women. The Government had adopted a three-pronged approach of prevention, intervention and advocacy. It had also adopted a set of recommendations aimed at improving the structure of the bodies working to combat the issue, from the community level to the national level, and had taken steps to implement the joint United Nations programme on prevention of and response to gender-based violence in Sri Lanka.

12. The final priority area was women's engagement in political and public life. Recognizing the contribution that women could make as agents of reconciliation and peacebuilding, the Government had set up programmes across the country, some of them in collaboration with United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies, with a view to engaging women, particularly female-headed households, in the peacebuilding process.

13. **Mr. Ghedira** (Tunisia), speaking as a youth delegate, said that women had always played a central role in Tunisia. Noting the efforts of pioneering women in such fields as medicine and politics, stretching back as far as the ninth century B.C., he said that women were seen as essential drivers of the country's development and pillars of society because of the role they played in raising future generations. There was no contradiction between the freedom of women and Islam.

14. In 1956 a ground-breaking law had been passed that banned polygamy, formalized divorce and required the consent of both parties for marriage. Since then, the Government had continued to strengthen women's role in society. For instance, electoral lists had to include equal numbers of male and female candidates, and women accounted for 30 per cent of members of parliament. Although much remained to be done, particularly in terms of legislative change, young Tunisians were optimistic as the country had always been a leader in the field of gender equality.

15. **Ms. Goldrick** (Nicaragua) said that gender equality and the empowerment of women were essential for achieving sustainable development. Indeed, not only was there a stand-alone goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, but it was also a cross-cutting theme for all of the Sustainable Development Goals.

16. While much progress had been made in terms of improving gender equality, boosting women's empowerment, reducing poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals, in particular in Latin America and the Caribbean, women still suffered from discrimination, especially women migrants, indigenous women, women living with disabilities or HIV/AIDS, women living in rural areas or conflict zones, and women living in countries under foreign occupation or economic sanctions.

17. Her Government's commitment to promoting gender equality and ensuring that women occupied prominent positions in the political, economic and social fields was enshrined in various laws. Its family law included a strategy aimed at combating violence against women through family counselling services, with a view to promoting dialogue and eradicating the cultural roots of gender-based violence. In 2012, Nicaragua had also passed a law stipulating that all electoral lists should include equal numbers of male and female candidates. That had been a turning point in the economic, political and social transformation of the situation of women as the law had dramatically increased the number of women in national and local government positions and had given them a voice in the decision-making process.

18. **Ms. Cornelissen** (Netherlands) said that she had interviewed two women farmers, one in the Netherlands and one in Nepal, whose experiences had highlighted the devastating impact that climate change — acknowledged as the world's greatest challenge with the adoption of landmark agreements such as the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris

Agreement — was having across the globe, particularly on women. A disproportionate number of women were responsible for putting food on the table, collecting water and fuel and looking after their families, and as a result women were the hardest hit by climate change.

19. At the same time, women were also underrepresented among the people with the means to tackle climate change, such as landowners, decision makers, entrepreneurs, bank managers and scientists. Stressing that women needed access to knowledge, political power, funding and corporate decision-making, she urged all countries to ensure that women could own land, inherit, get credit, start a business and receive an education, and to change the structures of political, corporate and academic power to ensure that women were included in decision-making processes.

20. **Ms. Abdulmaleki** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, without a conducive internal and external environment, women's development and empowerment were unlikely to be achieved. In many places, disparities and exclusion remained high while extraordinary challenges, such as armed conflicts, had caused a substantive regression in women's progress in the affected areas. Women were particularly affected in the Middle East due to, inter alia, foreign intervention, military invasion and foreign occupation, combined with the upsurge of terrorism inspired by salafist and takfirist ideologies.

21. Despite impediments including unjust sanctions against their country, Iranian women continued to increase their role in society. The Government was determined to ensure a more central role for women in all spheres of life, particularly through promoting their participation in decision-making and the labour market by offering greater access to education, economic resources and employment opportunities, as well as making women equal beneficiaries of development.

22. In that regard, the President had directly intervened to suspend the national civil service recruitment exam in order to rectify gender quotas and ensure gender balance. Furthermore, the sixth national five-year development plan for the period from 2016 to 2020 included the goal of an annual 10 per cent increase in the number of women at high-level executive positions and called on all governmental organizations to apply a gender-sensitive approach to their planning, policies and programmes. Following the February 2016 parliamentary election the number of women parliamentarians had doubled, and, in order to enhance the promotion of human rights, the President had appointed a woman to oversee the progress of his proposed a citizen's rights charter through the legislature.

23. Moreover, the number of women entering higher education had exceeded the number of men, and improvements had been made in women's health indicators and health-related services. Rapid growth had also been recorded in social support programmes, including in the implementation of an empowerment plan for female-led households, the economic empowerment of women prisoners, the provision of extensive social support for female drug users, and the preparation of a national bill on the security of women and children in social interactions.

24. **Mr. Al-Hussaini** (Iraq) said that his country had enacted a number of laws to entrench the principle of gender equality and eliminate all gender-based discrimination. A number of national bodies to promote the interests and rights of women and children had been established, including the Parliamentary Committee for Women and Children, the Department of Community Policing, and the Children's Welfare Department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The principle of gender equality was enshrined in Iraq's Constitution and the county's laws, including the country's amended nationality law, which stipulated that Iraqi men and women enjoyed the same rights in terms of passing on their nationality to their children. Iraqi legislation also established a 25percent quota for the representation of women in the country's parliament and governorate councils and, since 2003, women had held many key positions in Iraqi society and politics, including ministerial posts, that had formerly been held exclusively by men.

25. Men and women in Iraq enjoyed equal access to education, including technical and vocational training. Iraq was, moreover, encouraging the use of co-education, revising the country's textbooks and educational curricula to facilitate their use in mixed-gender classes, and striving to eliminate all gender-based discrimination in the distribution of grants and scholarships.

26. Iraq was also making every effort to eliminate violence against women and, to that end, had

strengthened the powers of relevant law enforcement authorities. It would prove impossible, however, to achieve sustainable development for women without peace and security. In that regard, he drew attention to the horrific violence that continued to be perpetrated against thousands of Yazidi and other women in Iraq by the terrorist Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Those women were treated in the most brutal manner, trafficked as sex slaves and traded as if they were mere objects. It was vital that the international community provided all possible assistance to Iraq so that its Government could liberate those women and facilitate their rehabilitation and reintegration into society. In that connection, he commended the ongoing cooperation between his Government and the United Nations, and warmly welcomed the signing in September 2016 by the Iraqi Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, of a landmark agreement on the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence in Iraq.

27. **Ms. García Gutierrez** (Costa Rica) said that, given the relationship between violence, discrimination and entrenched inequality, Costa Rica had endeavoured to create institutional means to prevent and punish all forms of violence against women and girls. Existing civil and criminal legislation covered, inter alia, domestic violence, commercial sexual exploitation and sexual harassment. Prevention policies, focusing on street violence, the treatment of women and symbolic violence, had also been launched. Moreover, significant advances had been made in implementing a comprehensive platform of support services for victims of violence.

28. Furthermore, providing women with the necessary instruments for their economic empowerment was crucial to enhancing their independence in other areas, as had been reaffirmed at the High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment in July 2016, co-chaired by the President of Costa Rica. Actions and programmes were also being launched to support entrepreneurial women and provide them with technical and economic support. In that regard, Costa Rica prioritized the implementation of a gender-based labour inspection programme to ensure that employers were fulfilling their commitments in such areas as equal pay.

29. Structural conditions continued to systematically limit the economic empowerment of women, including through unfavourable social and cultural norms, discriminatory laws, a lack of legal protection, and restricted access to financial, digital and property-related assets. It was clear that the cause of the gender gap was the division of work along gendered lines and in the lack of policies on joint social responsibility.

30. The State was responsible for challenging norms limiting women's access to the workplace or devaluing their work. Costa Rica had made significant progress in consolidating its institutional frameworks under its national policy for equality and gender equity. Its objectives were care as a social responsibility, employment and income, education and health, the effective protection of rights and eradication of violence, political participation, and the strengthening of institutions in favour of equality and gender equity. It also established strategies and public-private partnerships that would allow women full access to their rights.

31. **Ms. Kupradze** (Georgia) said that, among measures to promote gender equality, Georgia had improved its relevant legal framework and strengthened institutional mechanisms. The recently renewed action plan on the protection of human rights for the period from 2016 to 2017 contained separate chapters on gender equality, combating violence against women and domestic violence.

32. Furthermore, the national action plan on implementing Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), as well as the national action plan to combat violence against women, domestic violence and protection of victims and survivors, both covering the period from 2016 to 2017, had recently been approved as stand-alone documents. Seventeen legal acts had been revised in order to bring domestic legislation in line with the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

33. Moreover, under the newly adopted amendments to Georgia's procedural legislation, court judgements could be revised on the grounds of decisions made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The law on gender equality and the code on local self-government had also been amended

to establish gender equality councils in local municipalities.

34. With the support of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the Government had undertaken measures to adjust the Sustainable Development Goals agenda and its targets to its national circumstances and to mainstream gender in compliance with globally approved indicators. A joint technical working group had been established to discuss nationalizing the Sustainable Development Goal targets.

35. Lastly, the urgent need to establish international monitoring mechanisms on the ground was clear in the occupied regions of Georgia, where women and girls continued to be deprived of, inter alia, their rights to freedom of movement and to education in the Georgian language.

36. **Ms. Popovici** (Republic of Moldova) said that, in April 2016, the Moldovan Parliament had adopted a law which provided that women and men must each constitute a minimum of 40 per cent of a political party's candidates and cabinet ministers. The law also banned sexist language and images in the media and advertising, established a gender equality coordination group in the central public administration and expanded the responsibilities of local public authorities on gender equality. Having been achieved through close collaboration with the United Nations country office, civil society and human rights activists, it was important for the law to become known to the Moldovan public and fully implemented nationwide, with the participation of the media and advertising companies.

37. In September, Moldova had become the first country in South-East Europe to introduce education on gender-responsive budgeting in national universities, which would improve the capacities, knowledge and professional abilities of public servants to include human rights and gender policies in budget planning. Inclusive or social budgeting was key to ensuring that gender policies and national commitments for women's empowerment, such as maternity or parental leave, wage distribution and pension allocations, were backed by adequate and sustainable funding.

38. Given unresolved conflict in the Transnistrian region, where the State authorities were not in control and foreign military troops and arsenals were illegally stationed, Moldova acknowledged the need to increase the role of women in mediation and conflict settlement. In March 2016, an Information and Dialogue Session on Women, Peace and Security was held in Moldova with the participation of governmental authorities, law enforcement agencies and international partners to expand discussions on the topic. Further information on regional and global good practices featuring the participation of women in security issues, particularly conflict resolution, would enable Moldova to ensure that its national defence agenda was inclusive and facilitated the contribution of women.

39. **Mr. Emvula** (Namibia) said that patriarchal attitudes and some traditional beliefs were among the causes of violence against women in Namibia. Due to the increased incidence of intimate partner violence, the judiciary had increased its prosecution and sentencing of offenders. Cases of passion killings, rape and domestic abuse continued to receive particular attention from law enforcement authorities and prosecutors in an effort to punish those responsible and assist the victims. Regional offices of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare had been undertaking advocacy work to empower women and girls, and identify and address abusive situations.

40. In 2016, the Ministry of Labour had increased the minimum wage for domestic workers, which would increase the economic independence of female domestic workers and enhance their ability to negotiate in their households. The Procurement Act had also been passed with the aim of improving the economic empowerment of all Namibians, particularly women and young people. Similarly, the small and medium enterprise policy, which was also launched in 2016, emphasized women's economic empowerment in order to increase equity in business and entrepreneurship.

41. Moreover, the First Lady of Namibia had recently been named a Special Advocate for Young Women and Adolescent Girls by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS in its continued campaign for an AIDS-free world. As one of the countries most affected by AIDS, the First Lady's campaign would bring much needed visibility to the issue and galvanize

efforts to combat the disease, which had a particular impact on women and girls.

42. **Ms. al-Kahtani** (Saudi Arabia) said that her country was making every effort to empower women and ensure that they fully enjoyed all their rights. Saudi women actively participated in different areas of public life, including as members of the Shura Council. They also enjoyed the right to vote and to stand as candidates in municipal elections. They were appointed to diplomatic positions abroad and represented Saudi Arabia in international conferences. Furthermore, six women had, recently been appointed to Saudi Arabia's national human rights commission.

43. The Saudi Arabian Government was making every effort to strengthen the role of women in society and had adopted numerous laws and rulings to that end. Saudi Arabia had also passed legislation that prohibited domestic violence against women and children and offered protections for victims. Furthermore, the country's National Transformation Programme 2020 aimed to increase women's participation in the civil service to 42 per cent by that date.

44. Islamic law prohibited the oppression of women and all forms of discrimination on the basis of race, gender or colour. A party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, her country would continue to uphold and strengthen respect for the human rights of women in line with the provisions of Islamic law, international norms, and — as provided by article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights — national security, public order and public morality considerations.

45. The Government and people of Saudi Arabia were deeply concerned that women in many parts of the world continued to suffer as victims of violence, exploitation and human trafficking. In particular, they were concerned that Palestinian women continued to suffer grave violations of their rights by Israeli occupation forces. Saudi Arabia urged the international community to take prompt and decisive action to end those criminal and inhumane practices and bring the perpetrators of those crimes to justice.

46. **Mr. Zulu** (Zambia) said that his Government continued to take measures to address discrimination against women. In addition to the 2011 Anti-Gender-Based Violence Act, the Government had decided to establish two user-friendly fast-track courts to improve delivery of justice in gender-based violence cases, thereby increasing access to justice for both victims and alleged perpetrators. In 2015, the Government had also enacted Gender Equity and Equality Act No. 22, which domesticated major international and regional instruments.

47. As part of its continuing review and strengthening of policy and legal frameworks, in 2015 the Government had examined its national child policy and its national gender policy to provide for the protection of women and girls and address emerging issues of child, early and forced marriage. In addition, gender perspectives were being mainstreamed in all sectors of the economy.

48. In 2016, in collaboration with the World Bank, Zambia had launched the Girl's Education and Women's Empowerment and Livelihood Project, which aimed to increase access to livelihood support for vulnerable women, as well as ensure access to secondary education for disadvantaged adolescent girls. The project was designed to reach thousands of women between age 19 and 64.

49. Furthermore, the Government had continued its economic empowerment of vulnerable groups, including women with disabilities. To that end, 1,400 women's clubs and associations had benefited from financial grants, while income generating activities and food security at a household level had been promoted. The Government was also providing collateral-free loans to individual women through its microcredit scheme, which aimed to promote entrepreneurial skills among rural women and thus far had benefited approximately 6,000 women across Zambia.

50. **Ms. al-Muraikhi** (Qatar) said that by including a specific goal on gender equality in the 2030 Agenda, the international community had underscored its determination to make progress in that crucial area, and had emphasized the pivotal role that gender equality and women's empowerment played in the achievement of the other Sustainable Development Goals, including those related to poverty eradication, education, health, food security, and the promotion of just, peaceful and inclusive societies. The international community was also determined to achieve gender equality at the highest level of the United Nations, as

clearly demonstrated by the fact that so many women had recently put forward their candidatures for the post of Secretary-General of the Organization. Qatar fully supported the achievement of that goal through its membership of the Group of Friends in favour of a Woman Candidate for Secretary-General of the United Nations.

51. Qatari women enjoyed all their rights under the country's Constitution, which provided that Qatari citizens were equal in terms of their public rights and duties and that all were equal before the law. The Constitution also prohibited discrimination on the basis of gender, race, language or religion. Furthermore, through its implementation of the Qatar National Vision 2030, her country was building a society in which women played a leading role in all areas of life, while the National Development Strategy 2011-2016 aimed, inter alia, to empower women to take up leadership positions through education, capacity building and skills development programmes.

52. Women's empowerment was closely linked to the consolidation of the rights and duties of the family. The National Development Strategy therefore contained a sector strategy on family cohesion and women's empowerment to bolster and support families by promoting an appropriate balance between family members' work and family obligations. As part of that strategy, Qatar was expanding the provision of childcare services, encouraging the adoption of more flexible and family-friendly working hours, raising awareness of how responsibilities should be shared among family members, and reviewing the country's maternity leave policy.

53. The Constitution of Qatar provided for free and compulsory primary and secondary education for all male and female citizens, and almost twice as many women as men in Qatar were enrolled in tertiary education. Qatar had also established a number of specialized bodies that sought to combat violence against women and offer protection to its victims, and her country was convinced that the eradication of violence against women could accelerate development and help create safer and more harmonious societies. Qatar remained deeply concerned about the increasing numbers of female migrants and refugees who fell victim to human traffickers, and she reiterated her country's strong condemnation of all forms of violence against women in situations of armed conflict.

54. **Ms. Yparraguirre** (Philippines) said that, to address violence against women and girls, her country had recently enacted a series of laws that provided additional protection for women and children from physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse. The Inter-Agency Council on Violence against Women and their Children provided assistance to Government agencies in tackling cases of violence against women, with the help of guidebooks and assessment tools. Residential care facilities and rape crisis centres in different parts of the country had been established to provide protective services for the victims-survivors.

55. Furthermore, in 2015, the Commission on Human Rights had issued the Gender Ombud Guidelines under the Magna Carta of Women and related laws to examine implementation of the law, monitor compliance, issue advisories, investigate cases and recommend sanctions for violations. Quezon City had partnered with UN-Women on a study to collect information on violence against women and girls in public places, including sexual harassment on public transport.

56. As nearly ten million Filipinos, many of whom were women, had migrated overseas for work, the Government had established a comprehensive support mechanism through a dedicated framework of laws, regulations, policies, programs and institutions, which was implemented with a migrant-centred approach based on human rights. Pre-employment seminars for migrant workers targeted counselling programmes for groups considered at risk, while the efforts of immigration authorities to screen for potential victims of trafficking had been intensified.

57. Women and, increasingly, children, were disproportionately affected by trafficking. In cooperation with faith-based and non-governmental organizations, the Government recovery and reintegration programme for trafficked persons offered a comprehensive package of services for individual victim or survivors, their immediate family and the community, and included livelihood assistance, skills training, support for victims and witnesses, financial assistance, temporary shelters, and psychological counselling. The programme had served 5,096

trafficking victims nationwide, 74 per cent of whom were women, since 2013.

58. The Philippines had also enhanced cooperation between law enforcement authorities and prosecutors to build stronger cases against the perpetrators to ensure that justice was served. The number of convictions had increased six-fold during the period from 2011 to 2015, compared to the previous five-year period. Many of those convicted for trafficking crimes had been given the maximum punishment of life imprisonment.

59. **Ms. Konurbayeva** (Kazakhstan) said that it was necessary to link women's advancement and such pivotal issues as peace and security, human rights, sustainable development, poverty reduction and climate change mitigation. There was a need for global policy directives and long-term macro strategies, supported by official development assistance and North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation, to overcome inequities in education, employment, marriage, parenthood, reproductive health and political participation. Capacity building to ensure government accountability and the rule of law was essential, and must be accompanied by stricter monitoring and the use of gender statistics.

60. Kazakhstan had progressive gender-oriented policies and programmes, underpinned by the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action, among other instruments. Through a joint technical support programme with United Nations agencies based in the region, her Government had strengthened efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls. It was focusing on ensuring women's political participation and economic empowerment with a view to reducing poverty, and improving access to education and jobs, which in turn would reduce the level of trafficking in women and girls. Kazakhstan had a literacy rate of 99.8 per cent and 55 per cent of all State public offices were held by women.

61. Kazakhstan had successfully implemented a 10-year national action plan on gender equality covering the period from 2006 to 2016 and was due to adopt a new national policy on family and gender in 2016. As a member of the Commission on the Status of Women, it would continue to contribute financially and politically with a view to achieving women's full equality and empowerment.

62. **Ms. Bernadel** (Haiti) said that progress had been made towards ensuring women's equal participation in education, professional training and decision-making processes at the national, regional and international levels. Her country's national ministry for women's rights was responsible for shaping and implementing equitable public policies for the promotion and protection of women's rights and the mainstreaming of gender-based analysis. Despite the challenges which remained, some progress had been made in the six areas prioritized by her Government since its adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, which included education and training for women, literacy, and women and the economy.

63. Women's role in the Haitian economy was underestimated: women managed 25.3 per cent of family farms, for instance. Recent progress included an increase in the minimum wage which covered domestic workers, the majority of whom were women, and advances in health and family planning, with maternal mortality falling and more women aware of how to use modern forms of contraception. Following the 2010 earthquake, the Government had intervened to counter violence against women in displaced persons camps. In addition, it had taken structural measures to combat violence against women, such as establishing a unit dedicated to women's affairs within the national police force and improving its methods of generating and disseminating data on gender-based violence. Ten out of 28 ministerial positions in Haiti were occupied by women, and women led four of the country's political parties (comprising 10 per cent of party leaders). Awareness-raising and training on gender issues must be strengthened to ensure that women continued to acquire more rights. With political will, targeted actions, the necessary resources and social mobilization, equality was possible.

64. **Mr. Canay** (Turkey) said that his nation's commitment to improving the living standards of women and girls and ensuring that their rights were respected was demonstrated by the judicial reforms that the Government had been undertaking, as well as recent constitutional amendments that had introduced positive discrimination. Turkey continued to assist the United Nations in its efforts to achieve gender equality

and empower women. For example, it had supported the establishment of the UN-Women Europe and Central Asia Regional Office in Istanbul and had hosted the Global Conference on Ending Violence Against Women in December 2015.

65. Turkey had carried out extensive legislative and practical protection work to combat violence against women, and continued to contribute to relevant international normative and practical efforts. It had taken part in the drafting of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and was the first country to have ratified it. Its national action plan on combating violence against women was being renewed and updated for the period from 2016 to 2019. To date Turkey had established 46 violence prevention and monitoring centres, where women exposed to violence could seek help.

66. Women's advancement must be prioritized in all contexts, including crisis situations; it was therefore encouraging that women's and girls' empowerment had emerged as an overarching theme at the World Humanitarian Summit, held in May 2016. The advancement of women had guided his Government's humanitarian efforts in support of the 2.7 million Syrians who had fled their country. The Government granted the refugees temporary protected status and access to the national health system. More than 170,000 Syrian babies had been born in Turkish protection centres to date, and steps had been taken to ensure that the centres operated in a gender-sensitive manner. The international community should abide by the commitments it had made at the World Humanitarian Summit and in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants in order to provide the millions of displaced women and girls worldwide with the support they needed.

67. **Ms. Krisnamurthi** (Indonesia) said that poverty affected women more severely than men as a result of gender-based discrimination, which led to poor women having fewer opportunities. That in turn meant fewer resources, which could leave them vulnerable to violence and exploitation. Indonesia had incorporated the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including its gender-related targets, into its national frameworks. The President had made gender equality an institutional priority, and chosen three focus areas: increasing women's participation in decision-making processes; reducing maternal mortality and improving women's access to health services, including reproductive health services; and ending violence against women and girls. In support of the presidential commitment, in 2016 her Government had implemented a new programme designed to support the achievement of gender equality at the provincial, regency and community levels. The programme specifically addressed violence against women, human trafficking and barriers to economic justice. Activities under the programme included a protection scheme for witnesses and victims of violence, compulsory training for prospective migrant workers and training for women entrepreneurs.

68. **Mr. Bala** (Nigeria) reaffirmed his Government's commitment to implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. Nigeria had put into place policies to address the challenges hindering women's advancement, such as the Growing Girls and Women in Nigeria initiative, which linked budgetary processes to specific targets that would improve the lives and well-being of disadvantaged girls and women. To overcome the barriers faced by women in political and public life, the Government was supporting the offices responsible for women's political empowerment to identify, encourage and help women with the right credentials to run for political office. Its commitment was demonstrated by the appointment of highly qualified women to the cabinet of ministers. The gender units of all government ministries had been strengthened in order to effectively mainstream gender into all spheres of national life.

69. The Government had finalized plans for a cash transfer scheme and an enterprise programme, which would provide financial support to over a million women, artisans and agricultural workers. It had established social safety nets for approximately 25 million vulnerable citizens, including single mothers and survivors of gender-based violence. The Government had also established a programme to encourage men and women to be champions of gender equality and women's empowerment, and had intensified its campaign to encourage girls to study science subjects and enhance their knowledge of information technology in order to facilitate their future participation in national development. Lastly, a

law passed in 2015 on violence was contributing significantly to reducing violence against women.

70. **Ms. Lobo Juarez** (Honduras) said that the growth of rural economies was limited by gender-based barriers that blocked rural women's access to basic resources, such as credit. To empower women economically the Government had established a programme to give rural women access to credit and technical assistance. The programme would support productive economic activities and services with a view to improving the lives of individual women, their families and their communities.

71. Since discrimination at work was a root cause of poverty, forced child labour and social exclusion, the national congress had adopted a law mandating that women and men must receive equal pay for work of equal value. It was imperative for women and men to have the same opportunities and financial security, which was achieved by ensuring that both salaries and social security benefits were equal. Honduras remained committed to promoting women's economic autonomy, which was indispensable for their advancement.

72. **Mr. Mminele** (South Africa) said that the African Union had declared 2016 "African Year of Human Rights with Particular Focus on the Rights of Women"; it also marked the sixtieth anniversary of the protest in Pretoria against the extension of the pass laws in apartheid South Africa, in which 20,000 women from all walks of life had participated.

73. In March 2016 South Africa had submitted its fifth periodic report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The report described the progress South Africa had made, which included the establishment of a gender-responsive budgeting framework designed to ensure that there was financing for women's empowerment at all levels of government. Challenges remained, however, despite the anti-discriminatory legislative and regulatory framework in place.

74. Forty-two per cent of Government employees were women, which demonstrated his country's commitment to achieving gender parity in public life. South Africa ranked third in the world in terms of women's parliamentary representation, with women accounting for 52 per cent of chairpersons of parliamentary committees. South Africa continued to implement the 2030 Agenda in coordination with its own national development plan, which urged all citizens to work towards the advancement of women and girls.

75. **Ms. Soulama** (Burkina Faso) said that women contributed significantly to economies when they benefitted from equal economic, political and civil rights. Burkina Faso had made noteworthy legislative, institutional, political and socioeconomic progress on women's advancement since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Plan of Action. Conscious of the fact that inequalities would hinder the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, her Government had undertaken a number of reforms, resulting in policies and strategies that promoted and protected women's rights.

76. Specifically, her Government had taken various actions to address violence against women and to promote gender equality and women's entrepreneurship. Among the initiatives were a programme to combat violence against women and girls, which included awareness-raising and training activities; a 2015 law on violence against women and girls, which focused on prevention and reparations; the establishment of a 30 per cent quota for women on lists of candidates in legislative and municipal elections; and the adoption of a law designed to strengthen rural women's access to land.

77. In addition, the Government had adopted a national strategy on accelerating girls' education and established a national literacy programme. Maternal mortality had fallen and would continue to do so as a result of measures taken in 2016 to ensure that pregnant women had access to free care. A strategy to promote women's entrepreneurship had been adopted and a directorate for women's economic empowerment had been established. In the light of the many challenges that remained, the Government had adopted gender as a guiding principle in relation to its national economic and social development plan, and intended to strengthen women's representation in political life through the application of its quota law. Sustainable development was not possible without the effective participation of autonomous women with the same political, civil and economic rights as men.

78. **Ms. Baomar** (Oman) said that men and women in her country enjoyed the same rights and freedoms, and that Omani women enjoyed greater freedoms and more robust legal safeguards than in other States in the region. More than 50 per cent of girls in Oman attended school and women comprised 55 per cent of students at Oman's universities. The number of women in the workforce was also increasing steadily, and, in 2012, women had comprised 43 per cent of the civil service and 20.3 per cent of the private sector workforce. Women had held ministerial, ambassadorial and other senior positions in Government and the civil service, and leadership positions in Oman's public and private sector economies. Women had also been appointed to the judiciary and had risen to high-ranking posts in the country's police and armed forces.

79. Omani women also enjoyed the right to vote and to stand as candidates in municipal elections and in elections to the two houses of the Omani parliament. Women and men received the same salaries and enjoyed the same rights when applying to the Government for residential land. Omani women were also protected under the law from dismissal if they became pregnant or fell ill, and they were entitled to 50 days of paid maternity leave and could take up to one additional year of unpaid leave when they had a child.

80. In 2015, Oman had informed the Human Rights Council that it intended to withdraw its reservation to article 15, paragraph 4 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and was amending its passports law so that women could obtain passports and travel without first obtaining the permission of a male guardian. Oman believed that protecting and empowering women also strengthened the family and society, and would continue to ensure that that goal remained a priority in all Omani policies and programmes.

81. **Ms. Karabaeva** (Kyrgyzstan) said that the advancement of women could be achieved most effectively by facilitating economic independence and political participation, and by increasing girls' access to secondary and higher education through measures including the construction of schools in rural areas. Kyrgyzstan had made advances in supporting women's leadership in parliament, the government, the judiciary and elsewhere.

82. Migrant exploitation and human trafficking were exacerbated by increasingly exclusionary immigration policies criminalizing irregular migrants, a lack of sufficient channels for regular migration and family reunification, and the exclusion of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants from employment. To prevent the vulnerable, and particularly women and girls, falling prey to trafficking, measures were needed that addressed poverty, unemployment, access to education, unsafe migration, and gender-based discrimination.

83. **Ms. Sukkar** (Jordan) said that article 6 of her country's Constitution stipulated that all Jordanians should be equal before the law and that there should be no discrimination among them in terms of their rights and duties. Her country was striving to increase the number of women in decision-making positions and achieve equality of opportunity between men and women. In the parliamentary elections held in September 2016, women had increased their share of seats in the lower house of parliament from 12 to 15.4 per cent, and ten women had been appointed to the 65-seat upper house. There were also 176 female judges in Jordan, who comprised more than 18 per cent of the judiciary.

84. Jordan's 2013-2017 National Strategy for Women had adopted a participatory approach that brought together all relevant Governmental and civil society stakeholders with a view to empowering women in the social, economic, political and cultural fields, and accelerating the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5. Jordan believed, moreover, that women must be involved as full partners in all initiatives to promote inclusive development and address the country's social and economic challenges, and was therefore amending the labour and social security laws to promote women's participation in the labour market.

85. Violence against women occurred in every country in the world and was one of the most widespread violations of human rights at the global level. In response to the new forms of violence and the massive migration flows taking place throughout the region, which were causing significant demographic, social and cultural changes, Jordan had formulated a draft that would provide legal protections for the victims of family violence. That draft law would be submitted to parliament for adoption in the near future.

Jordan hosted 1.4 million Syrian refugees, 51 per cent of whom were women and girls, and was striving to ensure their safety and provide them with high quality services in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions and international instruments. Jordan was also working with relevant United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations in the country to raise awareness of health issues, including reproductive health, among Syrian refugee women and girls and, in collaboration with the Jordanian Police Family Protection Department, was holding training courses for non-governmental organization staff in refugee camps on how they should interact with women and girls who had been subjected to violence. Jordan was also concerned about the situation of Palestinian women living under Israeli occupation, including restrictions placed on their movement and violations of their rights to safety and security.

86. **Ms. Vieira** (Cabo Verde) said that gender parity had essentially been achieved in her country at all levels of education and literacy, with work underway on improved family planning, better access to reproductive health care, and assured reproductive rights. Regulatory frameworks were in development to promote and protect women's human rights, and to eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against women. The country had implemented national plans promoting equal rights, obligations and opportunities for men and women.

87. Much work was still needed for effective implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. Her delegation called for increased efforts to promote the political participation and leadership of women and ensure their broader representation in decision-making positions.

88. **Ms. Nandi** (Myanmar) said that her country had taken the necessary measures to eliminate discrimination against women and girls and promote their basic rights. Following the review of its report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in June 2016, Myanmar would form a working group to implement the recommendations in the Committee's concluding observations and report on its progress within two years.

89. A National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (2013-2022) had been adopted in October 2013 to ensure gender equality for women, in addition to the equal rights granted to all by the State Constitution of Myanmar. Recent efforts had increased the participation of women in government and politics to its highest level, with over half of all government employees female.

90. Myanmar was a signatory to the Declaration of Commitment to end Sexual Violence in Conflict, and a domestic Anti-violence against Women law was in the final stage of drafting. At the regional level, the Government was collaborating with members of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights to implement the 2015ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Women.

91. **Ms. Guzmán Madera** (Dominican Republic) said that continued implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action was crucial to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and gender equality. The Dominican Republic had adopted policies encouraging cooperation between all government bodies to address the main gender disparities faced by women.

92. The Government had employed various measures to raise awareness among victims of gender violence, and had devised a femicide investigation protocol to establish procedures for optimizing capacities and standardizing scientific femicide investigation techniques.

93. Many poor and marginalized adolescents still experienced discrimination and exclusion from services such as education and health care, putting them at greater risk of exploitation, abuse and violence. Further coordinated efforts were needed to combat child marriage, female genital mutilation and other harmful practices, and the Government had introduced measures to reduce teen pregnancy rates.

94. **Mr. Rasuli** (Afghanistan) said that Afghan women and girls had experienced significant improvements in their political, social, economic and cultural rights since the fall of the Taliban. Women had equal voting rights, as well as significant representation in political decision-making with an allocation of 17 per cent and 26 per cent of seats in the upper and lower parliamentary houses, respectively. Women's access to education had improved markedly since 2001. The proportion of female students in

primary and secondary schools had risen from almost zero to 40 per cent, with a considerable increase at third level also.

95. Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, which was dependent on economic, political and security factors, should be imminent in Afghanistan. The Government would invest around $250 million in its National Priority Program, which focused in part on women's economic empowerment as a means of achieving those goals. The National Action Plan to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security would increase the number of women in the security forces by 20 per cent.

96. **Ms. Hadju** (Canada) said that Canada had underscored its international commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at the recent session of the Commission on the Status of Women, seeking out membership for the 2017 to 2021 term. As Minister of Status of Women, she had engaged key stakeholders across the country to develop a Federal Strategy Against Gender-based Violence. The Government was also addressing the much higher rate of violence faced by indigenous women and girls in Canada, and had launched a National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

97. Canada was developing a Framework for Early Education and Childcare to ensure broader access to childcare as a means of promoting gender equality, and a Poverty Reduction Strategy to tackle persistent income disparities. A plan was in place to increase gender-based analysis in federal decisions on policies, programmes and legislation, and a new transparent appointment process would promote diversity in senior government positions.

98. **Ms. Zewdie** (Ethiopia) said that her country had implemented a number of policies, legal frameworks and administrative measures supporting the advancement of women. The proportion of women in parliament had risen from 2.75 per cent in 1995 to 38.8 per cent in 2015, and had reached over 40 per cent in regional councils and 50 per cent in local councils. In courts of first instance, 41 per cent of judges were women. Half of all job openings created via the Government's Urban Development Package had been reserved for women to promote equal access to earning opportunities, and, to increase home ownership among women, 30 per cent of new public housing units were reserved for women.

99. In education, the rate of school participation by girls had reached a gender parity index (GPI) of 94 per cent at primary level, 47 per cent at secondary, 32 per cent at undergraduate and 20 per cent at postgraduate. The GPI for technical and vocational training was 51 per cent. With regard to health care, the country's Health Extension Program had deployed over 41,000 health extension workers nationwide, 98 per cent of whom were women.

100. **Ms. Singh** (Australia) said that the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022 sought to reduce levels of violence against women through cooperation between government, community and civil society, while the complementary Women's Safety Package provided practical and immediate action to keep women and children safe and support victims of violence. The dual approach was needed as prevention took time to deliver tangible results, and awareness-raising could increase demand for support services by making people aware of the help available.

101. Australia was partnering with Pacific neighbours to address the underlying causes of gender violence, and was helping local women's rights organisations to work with governments on drafting by-laws to eliminate a number of harmful practices such as polygamy, bride price and the murder of women accused of sorcery. The country was also providing an additional $6 million to the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, and would promote gender equality and women's empowerment through its aid programme.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

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Chair: Ms. Mejía Vélez ..... (Colombia)

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Agenda item 27: Advancement of women (*continued*)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 27: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/71/38 (Supp), A/71/219, A/71/223, A/71/209, A/71/306 and A/71/398)

1. **Ms. del Águila Castillo** (Guatemala) said that International Day of the Girl Child was a timely moment to reflect on the progress made to date and the challenges that lay ahead. The achievement of gender equality in line with Sustainable Development Goal 5 would require an explicit focus on the collection and analysis of data, disaggregated by sex and by age. Equal access to formal education, as set out in Goal 3, would open up opportunities for work outside the agricultural sector and for holding public office. While the proportion of women employed in non-agricultural sectors in Guatemala had risen slightly, family responsibilities such as childcare and housework often prevented women from joining the economically active population. Other challenges included raising the profile of unpaid work and establishing a system that effectively protected women's rights and provided adequate social security coverage.

2. Guatemala had adopted a number of laws and policies aimed at fulfilling its commitments under international instruments. They included a law which provided that searches for women reported to have disappeared should be initiated immediately in an effort to prevent them from coming to further harm. The 2014-2024 public policy on combating human trafficking and ensuring comprehensive victim protection aimed to improve institutional coordination in those matters, while a decree had established a minimum age of 18 years for marriage for both sexes.

3. **Ms. Maduhu** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that the world would not be able to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals if half of its population was held back. Her Government was therefore strongly committed to mainstreaming gender equality and gender-based violence objectives in all policies and programmes, including in national growth and poverty reduction strategies. It had amended the Constitution, revisited discriminatory provisions and enacted new laws with the aim of eliminating violence against women. Legal literacy campaigns, gender focal points in workplaces and police stations and campaigns against sexual and gender-based violence had also been introduced countrywide.

4. Despite the progress in Tanzanian health care and maternal health indicators, most women in rural areas still gave birth at home without a skilled attendant present and with no access to emergency obstetric care. An estimated 8,000 women died each year due to complications of pregnancy and childbirth and, for each death during childbirth, 20 women developed an injury, infection or life-changing disability. A Government programme providing disadvantaged women with free fistula surgery had alleviated the problem and surgeries under the programme now accounted for one third of all fistula surgeries. The programme also ensured training for hundreds of community health workers, outreach missions to raise awareness about fistula in rural areas and the dissemination of public service announcements about fistula on local radio and television stations. The upfront transportation costs of poor fistula patients continued to be paid for by the M-PESA money transfer microfinancing service.

5. Her delegation urged international partners to step up efforts and funding to promote basic rights to health and life.

6. **Ms. Dagher** (Lebanon) said that discrimination and violence against women and girls continued unabated in several parts of the world, impeding the realization of other fundamental rights. The advancement of women and girls and their protection from violence and discrimination was not only a human right, but a precondition of sustainable development and of the establishment of just and peaceful societies.

7. Lebanon had enshrined in its Constitution the guarantee of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that all citizens should be equal before the law. On the basis of that provision, the Government worked closely with civil society, the private sector and regional and international actors to advance women's rights. Those efforts had recently borne fruit with the adoption of the Domestic Violence Act. The Government had also collaborated with regional and international partners to combat human trafficking, mainly of women and girls, and enhance protection of migrant workers from all forms of violence. In collaboration with civil society and the private sector,

economic and financial incentives had been introduced to help women entrepreneurs and encourage women to join the workplace. In politics, municipal elections over the summer of 2016 had seen record numbers of women voters and candidates.

8. The main challenge facing Lebanon was the presence of more than 1.5 million Syrian and Palestinian refugees, over 70 per cent of whom were women and children. With its infrastructure and public services overstretched, Lebanon was unable to handle a humanitarian crisis of that scale on its own and requested Member States to commit to sharing the burden and the responsibility.

9. **Ms. Jónsdóttir** (Iceland) said that, although her country had topped the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index for a seventh successive year, the fight for gender equality was far from over.

10. She drew attention to new methods for tackling domestic violence in her country, including the removal of perpetrators from homes, restraining orders and better support and protection for victims. On the basis of projects piloted in the United States of America and Jordan, a coordinated service and consultation centre had been set up to cater for individuals subjected to violence or prostitution in a single location.

11. In line with the country's commitment to engage men and boys in the fight for gender equality and address the underlying factors of violence, the Prime Minister of Iceland had taken part in the HeForShe campaign. The country was also involved in the Barbershop initiative, a series of international conferences focusing on involving men in leadership positions in the discussion of gender equality.

12. After almost a decade of preparation, the finishing touches were being put to the equal pay standard, an initiative under which all men and women working for companies and institutions implementing the standard received equal pay. Seven or eight employers from a pilot project, including government offices, private companies and one union, were due to receive certification demonstrating that their employees were paid equally. The equal pay standard had been developed in line with International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standards to be adaptable to any country. Iceland hoped to be the first country in the world to have equal pay for all and she encouraged other Member States to join the initiative.

13. **Ms. Gueye** (Senegal) said that despite the best efforts of the international community to stamp out violence against women and girls, considerable challenges remained. Senegal had tried to put an end to the practice of excision, combat gender-based violence, promote gender equity and equality and increase women's involvement in efforts to promote peace.

14. Her Government had revised the Criminal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure to guarantee women and girls protection from all forms of violence. In 2015, programmes to boost economic and social capacity and development had freed up funds for 194 small and medium-sized youth enterprises, 80 per cent of whose members were women, and 355 projects centred on women. The two programmes had also served to generate revenue and job opportunities through activities in local development, production, trade in agriculture products, forestry, husbandry and fishing.

15. In the area of health care, a social protection policy had been adopted to improve the living conditions of vulnerable groups and a major campaign had been launched in 2015 to eradicate obstetrical fistula in various regions of the country. Treatment centres for victims of fistula had been set up to assist women with rehabilitation into society specifically in southern regions where they were sometimes marginalized and impoverished.

16. **Ms. Nunoshiba** (Japan) said that her country had been enhancing international cooperation and development assistance, with a view to building a society in which women could truly shine. In 2015, it had set aside $350 million in official development assistance over three years for education, with an emphasis on gender sensitivity and the empowerment of women and girls. In May 2016, it had introduced its Development Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. At the Group of Seven summit in Ise Shima in 2016, Japan had announced a global human resources development initiative for some 5,000 female government officials over three years and improved educational opportunities for over 50,000 girls. Every year since 2014, it had invited the world's top women leaders and other relevant

stakeholders to the World Assembly for Women to discuss women's empowerment.

17. In the current global context of ongoing conflicts and record numbers of refugees, migrants and displaced persons, the international community should emphasize the interconnection between women, peace and security. In that vein, Japan had been implementing an action plan on women, peace and security and had helped to organize the Asia-Pacific Regional Symposium on National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security in July 2016.

18. **Mr. Panayotov** (Bulgaria) said that his country had a long history of promoting gender equality and that over the previous 25 years the role of Bulgarian women in political life had steadily increased. Several important offices, including that of President of the National Assembly and Mayor of Sofia, were currently held by women. Two thirds of magistrates in national courts were women, as were one third of judges in the Constitutional Court and the prevailing majority of civil servants in the central and local administrations.

19. The Government regularly updated national legislation to incorporate a gender perspective and had passed a new law on gender equality in early 2016. In accordance with its accession to the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, Bulgaria was committed to developing policies in that area. The Government was also amending the National Strategy for the Promotion of Gender Equality to strengthen provisions on equal treatment, equal access to resources and equal participation in decision-making. A range of measures, including flexible working hours, opportunities for combining career and family life, promotion of the role of the father in the family, protective measures for working women and the promotion of entrepreneurship for women had been designed to provide women and men equal access to professional training and to the labour market and equal pay for work of equal value.

20. Bulgaria fully supported the concept of Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step It Up for Gender Equality by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and was committed to contributing to global efforts to achieve full gender equality within the next 15 years.

21. **Mr. Muhamedjanov** (Tajikistan) said that his Government had made equal rights and opportunities for women a priority since independence. It had developed and strengthened national laws, mechanisms, strategies and programmes to improve the status of women and expand the opportunities available to them. The Committee on Women and the Family helped to improve gender legislation and coordinate activities between the Government and civil society.

22. Tajikistan had implemented programmes to improve women's status, provide legal protection to the family, mothers and children and create an enabling environment for the employment of women and their involvement in governance. Incorporating the gender perspective into national economic and social strategies and plans had also attracted more attention to women's issues.

23. One aim of the recent high-level symposium on Sustainable Development Goal 6 in Dushanbe was to increase women's participation in water-related programmes. A priority issue at the symposium had been to ensure that sustainable development was human-focused by establishing linkages between Goals 5 and 6. Achievement of those Goals would, however, require greater funding and commitments by the international community. The sixty-first session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women would provide a further timely opportunity to discuss ways in which to involve women in the implementation of Goal 5. As a member of the Commission, Tajikistan was keen to cooperate with Member States and international and regional organizations to increase women's involvement in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

24. **Mr. Brown** (Liberia) said that gender equality and women's empowerment could be realized only once all facets of discrimination had been eliminated and a propitious environment in which women could thrive had been created. The fact that the country's gender inequality could now be measured was a step forward, but much remained to be done to address the persistent lack of access to justice, violence and cultural restrictions faced by women.

25. With a view to meeting its obligations with regard to Sustainable Development Goal 5 and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), Liberia was currently localizing its Sustainable Development Goals, decentralizing governance, implementing Ebola

recovery plans and drawing down the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). The recent adoption of the Equal Representation and Participation Act, which provided for additional seats for women in parliament, and the Domestic Violence Act, as well as the Government's endorsement of the HeForShe campaign, demonstrated the country's commitment to enhancing women's political and economic empowerment and to inclusivity.

26. Mindful of the importance of cooperation, his Government was grateful to the development partners of Liberia, including UN-Women, for their programmes supporting women and girls. At such a critical moment, leading up to the presidential elections and the UNMIL drawdown, women should be encouraged to vote, partake in decision-making and to play no less of a role in ensuring peaceful and fair elections than they had played in obtaining peace.

27. **Mr. Njie** (Gambia) said that despite overwhelming consensus that women were the pillars of society and the backbone of economies, particularly agrarian economies, they still suffered from marginalization and discrimination. The main obstacle to women's empowerment was the deep-seated belief that women were weak and secondary in importance, and the only way to eliminate such discrimination was through enlightened leadership that demonstrated trust in women. The Gambia had therefore made gender parity a priority through affirmative action policies. Women held important and strategic portfolios in the cabinet, and the vice president was also a woman. Eight out of eleven jurists at the high court were women, and the deputy speaker of the National Assembly was a woman, in a deliberate effort to bring equilibrium to the three arms of government and ensure that women were well represented.

28. Violence was a factor impeding women's empowerment, particularly traditional practices such as female genital mutilation and child marriage. General Assembly resolution 69/150 had reaffirmed that female genital mutilation was a harmful practice and a form of violence. Gambia agreed that there was an urgent need to eradicate the practice, and thus it had banned and criminalized female genital mutilation and made it punishable by heavy fines and imprisonment.

29. Countries should encourage legislation to provide a legal framework for gender equality and undertake reviews of their national laws in order to align them with international conventions and to eradicate gender-based discrimination. Women could also be empowered through enhanced investment in agriculture and the informal economic sectors. Other measures that should be implemented were reforms to encourage women's ownership of land, increases in microfinancing and other credit facilities and improved education for women.

30. **Mr. Komara** (Guinea) said that the advancement of women had taken on a new prominence since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals and the signing of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Nevertheless, women were still victims of violence, exploitation, sexual abuse and institutional and cultural discrimination. Women bore the brunt of the numerous political and economic crises taking place around the world, particularly in Africa. Guinea was among those States that recognized and defended the role of women in bringing about peace and prosperity worldwide.

31. The fight against the Ebola virus in Guinea was an historic opportunity to witness women's capacity to transform the world. The country had initiated a post-Ebola recovery and resilience fund that gave priority to development projects for girls and women, and had strengthened public-private partnership to increase financing for projects in rural areas to increase food security. Other important initiatives included the design of 30 women-centred financing projects by the Commission of the African Union, the creation with the United Nations of multidimensional empowerment platforms for women in Upper Guinea and support for women and girl victims of Ebola.

32. The Government of Guinea had promoted an educational system that respected gender equality at all levels. It had trained girls in new information and communications technology and had supported literacy programmes. Women's health, particularly maternal health, was also important for the promotion and empowerment of women and for this reason, Guinea provided caesarean sections free of charge and efforts were being made to prevent and treat obstetric fistulas.

33. **Ms. Khan** (Pakistan) said that armed conflict and illegal occupation exacerbated the plight of women. Three quarters of the Syrian refugee population was composed of women and children, and in Indian-occupied Kashmir thousands of women had fallen

victim to oppression and occupation, with countless others suffering rape and sexual abuse. However, Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) had taken a new approach and had chosen not to view women merely as victims of conflict, but rather had recognized that women could play a key role in conflict prevention and resolution and in peacebuilding.

34. Pakistan remained committed to the advancement of women's rights and to that end, had just passed comprehensive legislation on offences relating to rape and offences in the name of, or on the pretext of, honour. By strengthening existing legal frameworks, including the imposition of life sentences for any act of honour killing, that legislation was a firm and unequivocal message that there was no honour in honour killing. The Government would take all necessary measures to ensure that it was implemented.

35. Pakistan's development-oriented economic action plan for the long-term took full account of gender issues. It focused on ending discrimination against women and on creating an environment that would allow women to develop their full potential and share the benefits of economic growth, prosperity, and social development.

36. **Ms. Oh** Youngju (Republic of Korea) said that women's economic empowerment, which was a cornerstone of the Sustainable Development Goals, contributed to the building of stronger and more inclusive economies. In that regard, the creation of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment was a welcome development. Her Government had strived to break systemic constraints against women's economic empowerment that were the result of social norms and insufficient legal protection, and was also building partnerships with civil society organizations and businesses to provide female workers with fair opportunities.

37. Women and girls around the world were often deprived of access to basic education, health care and proper nutrition and still faced political, economic and cultural restraints. To address that problem, in 2015 the Government of the Republic of Korea had launched an initiative called "Better Life for Girls", which supported girls' education, health and professional development in developing countries. Under that initiative, it would provide $200 million over five years for relevant projects.

38. Women's participation in the decision-making process was also crucial to women's empowerment and the elimination of the structural causes of gender discrimination, as such participation would ensure that women's needs were reflected in relevant policy decisions. The Republic of Korea had strengthened legal and institutional frameworks by revising the Framework Act on Gender Equality and by increasing the number of gender-related programmes and projects. Those efforts had led to a continued increase in the proportion of women in government committees, public institution management and academic circles over previous years.

39. **Ms. Sabja** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that, since the enactment of a new Constitution in 2009 containing provisions on gender equality, the political participation of women in her country had dramatically increased from 19 per cent in 2004 to 43 per cent. Bolivia was currently ranked second in the world for the number of women involved in politics.

40. Access to education had also improved markedly. Although primary and secondary school completion rates were similar for girls and boys, the gulf between rural and indigenous pupils was wide, despite the fact that free and universal health and educational services were available to all Bolivians. Rural literacy rates, on the other hand, had reached 98.5 per cent in 2011.

41. Tackling the unjust and unequal relations that were detrimental to women would require the consideration and questioning of global power structures and a deconstruction of the patriarchal world order that supported women's subordination. Only then would it be possible to build a new order without poverty, hunger and war, where priority would be given to people rather than capital and the environment would be protected.

42. Her Government was working to eliminate violence and discrimination against women and girls, promote gender equality in decision-making, ensure women and girls' reproductive and sexual rights and bring about the just distribution of resources, land and opportunities for training. By nationalizing her country's natural resources, it had been able to increase the public budget tenfold and cut extreme poverty by 20 percentage points. It had done so with the active participation of women. For example, 30 per cent of Government ministers were women.

43. **Mr. Haycen** (Mauritania) said that, aware of the marginalization and discrimination faced by women and the efforts of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to achieve gender equality and women's advancement, Mauritania had ratified a number of international instruments concerning women and girls, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The Government had mainstreamed a gender approach in all its national policies and programmes and had adopted the principle of affirmative action in favour of women, a policy that had led to significant improvements for its women, particularly women with disabilities and rural women.

44. Mauritania had made progress in the legal, political and economic spheres with respect to women's empowerment. In the legal sphere, the Government had recently enacted a law to criminalize a number of forms of violence against women, and had adopted a retirement age of 60 for both men and women. The Personal Status Code was also being revised so that it would better align with societal changes. In the political sphere, women were represented in the legislature, and in the most recent legislative elections women had won 21 per cent of parliamentary seats. Women also held a number of ministerial portfolios and headed a number of domestic agencies and diplomatic missions. In the economic sphere, there had been some success in fighting unemployment among women. There had also been a focus on providing bank financing and loans to women for income-generating activities.

45. **Ms. Vilde** (Latvia) said that gender equality was an essential part of domestic and foreign policies in Latvia. Women were politically and economically active, highly educated and well represented in the fields of business, science and the law. Civil society participation was guaranteed at all levels of policymaking, and in terms of gender equality Latvia consistently ranked among the top 20 countries globally. Latvia had the second-highest proportion of women in senior business positions in the European Union.

46. However, much remained to be done, and the domestic focus was mainly on women's economic empowerment and the elimination of violence against women. Latvia was continuing to improve its legal framework and to undertake new international commitments. In May 2016, it had signed the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, and since 2015 the State had been funding social rehabilitation services for adult victims of violence. Expert training and awareness campaigns concerning domestic violence issues had been ongoing, including efforts to encourage victims to report violence, as were efforts to combat human trafficking. In the area of economic empowerment, Latvia was working to improve its tax system so that it better addressed income inequality and had introduced flexible childcare arrangements for working parents in order to help them achieve a better balance between work and family life. Latvia had also promoted women's participation in science, technology and digital fields.

47. **Ms. Izzeldin** (Sudan) said that the Sudan's pioneering position in the area of women's political participation was corroborated by statistics, with 66 per cent of civil service positions and 30 per cent of parliamentary seats held by women. Women were also represented in the armed forces and the police, and had assumed positions in the judiciary, the diplomatic corps and the private sector. In its efforts to empower women, the Government of the Sudan had set a number of strategies and policies, including a national strategy to combat violence against women.

48. In an effort to empower women, the Government had created a policy that focused on six fundamental areas, namely health, the environment, education, economic development, decision-making and peacebuilding. In addition, a number of administrative departments on women's affairs had been established and gender mainstreaming had been incorporated at all government divisions and ministries. The Ministry of Welfare and Social Security had started a project for rural women all over Sudan but with a particular focus on Darfur, for the purpose of funding women's microenterprises.

49. In 2005, the Sudan had also devised a strategy to combat gender-based violence and had created a unit to combat violence against women and girls. A community policing unit had also been established at the Ministry of the Interior to protect the family and children, and the Advisory Council for Human Rights,

in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund and the Human Rights Division of the United Nations Mission in Sudan, had paid special attention to raising awareness around violence against women in the Darfur states. In addition to those measures, in 2008 the State had adopted a strategy to fight female circumcision.

50. **Ms. Jakubone** (Lithuania) said that violence against women was a grave human rights violation, a form of discrimination, and also a serious drain on economic resources. Tangible tools for prevention of violence against women had been discussed at the most recent session of the Commission on the Status of Women. At the national level, Lithuania was committed to implementing its national programme and action plan for the prevention of domestic violence, with the ultimate goal of improving assistance to victims and establishing a zero-tolerance policy towards domestic violence. In addition, the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence against Women had been in effect for over four years.

51. The Lithuanian National Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men was based on a gender mainstreaming approach and was closely related to the Sustainable Development Goals. Its main priorities were to promote equal opportunities for men and women in employment, to promote gender balance in decision-making, to promote gender mainstreaming and to strengthen institutional mechanisms. In September 2016 Lithuania had adopted a new Labour Code that recognized the principle of respect for employees' family commitments and work-life balance. The Code also contemplated the possibility of parents working part-time or remotely.

52. **Ms. Abushawesh** (State of Palestine) said that the situation in the occupied State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, had worsened further since 2015, with detrimental effects on Palestinian women and their families at many different levels. Israel had used home demolitions as a means of collective punishment against the occupied Palestinian population. Humanitarian shelters, schools and agricultural fields had also been destroyed with little or no notice. On a recent visit to Palestine, the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences had witnessed the severe psychological impact that losing one's home had on women, depriving them of family memorabilia and shattering their hopes of a safe and secure future.

53. The Israeli military occupation remained the major obstacle to the equality, advancement and full empowerment of Palestinian women. The prolonged occupation had taken its toll on women, who struggled to ensure the protection and well-being of their families while dealing with the other gender issues faced by other women worldwide.

54. She called on the international community to address the unjust and unsustainable situation in accordance with obligations and responsibilities under international law, including humanitarian and human rights law. The United Nations must exert more efforts to compel Israel to end its fifty-year-old brutal military occupation and hold that occupying Power accountable for its violations and crimes committed against Palestinian women and their families and provide them with international protection until the termination of occupation and the realization of the independence of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

55. **Ms. Byaje** (Rwanda) said that her country had made tremendous strides towards gender equality and women's empowerment despite high unemployment, limited financial literacy and the general perception that women were not fit to become public leaders. During the 1994 genocide, which had claimed more than a million lives, more than a quarter of a million women had been raped, abused and left scarred for life, but women had also been among the perpetrators and were serving jail terms for their involvement in mass atrocities and, more recently, in acts of terrorism and genocide denial.

56. A number of national gender machineries had been put in place to develop and implement laws and policies on women. Comprehensive legal reforms that addressed women's empowerment had been adopted. The new Constitution provided for equal inheritance and succession rights for men and women. Other new legislation sought to prevent and punish gender-based violence and to guarantee women and men equal rights to access their own land. Rwanda had ratified a number of international treaties and protocols relating to women, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Protocol to the African Charter of Human and People's

Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa and the Kigali Declaration, adopted at the Kigali International Conference on the Role of Security Organs in Ending Violence Against Women and Girls.

57. Awareness of the importance of gender equality to sustainable development could enhance development planning. Strong gender institutions were critical and greater cooperation was needed to generate and manage gender-disaggregated data and dissemination of knowledge products.

58. **Ms. Marteles** (Spain) said that her country was a party to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, which provided a comprehensive response to the various forms of gender violence, including female genital mutilation, forced marriage, sexual assault, trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation and cyberbullying. The 2013-2016 National Strategy for the Eradication of Violence against Women prioritized those issues and the second comprehensive plan for combating trafficking in women and girls for sexual exploitation was currently in force.

59. A number of measures had been adopted as part of a holistic response to violence against women. The State Observatory on Violence against Women was established to collect, analyse and disseminate relevant information. The principle of promoting equal rights and opportunities and effective equality for men and women had been incorporated into the educational system along with steps to prevent gender-based violence. A broad-based support and protection system had been put in place for the victims of violence and their children. Victim Assistance Offices had been set up: much more than advisory bodies, they also guaranteed personalized treatment and sought to ensure that women and children were not further victimized during the legal process.

60. On 23 September, as leader of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, Spain had participated in the launch of the global network of focal points for promoting gender mainstreaming in conflict prevention, management and resolution. The second National Action Plan was being completed in order to incorporate civil society. Spain pledged to continue working to promote women's participation and leadership, as well as gender parity, not only on the domestic front but also through cooperation with multilateral mechanisms.

61. **Mr. Sesay** (Sierra Leone) said that Sierra Leone had developed a National Action Plan to comply with the provisions of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and would continue to uphold the relevant protocols relating to women's empowerment and to take part in the Secretary-General's UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign. A number of relevant laws had been enacted and the National Action Plan and the Referral Protocol on Gender-based Violence would be implemented. As judges in the Supreme Court and the High Court, women were having an impact on the interpretation of the country's laws, while, as leaders of the newly established legal aid board, they were at the forefront of efforts to ensure that marginalized persons had access to justice.

62. The outbreak of the Ebola virus had taken a toll on the country's programmes but his Government was determined to meet the challenges. Under the Post-Ebola Programme, mainstreaming gender into the programme's six priority sectors was critical for success. Priority was being given to providing free care for pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under five. Another challenge being addressed was that of reducing adolescent pregnancies. His delegation looked forward to sustained cooperation and partnerships in mobilizing the resources required for success at all levels.

63. Renewed commitment to the issue of the empowerment of women was needed and the importance of developing and driving solutions to expand women's opportunities in order to meet the Sustainable Development Goals could not be overstated. He drew inspiration from the fact that the centrality of gender issues was changing mentalities, inspiring actions and changing lives in all countries. The international community should continue to put gender at the heart of its quest for a better world.

64. **Mr. Momen** (Bangladesh) said that women's empowerment had been placed at the heart of the development agenda in Bangladesh. In recognition of her role in promoting the advancement of women, his Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, had recently been declared Planet 50-50 Champion by UN-Women and had been granted the Agent of Change Award by the Global Partnership Forum. Gender parity had been

attained in primary and secondary school enrolment in Bangladesh and girls benefited from free education up to grade 12. Women's participation in the workforce had jumped from 7 per cent in 2000 to over 36 per cent currently. Of the 350 parliamentary seats, 50 were reserved for women and the posts of Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition, Speaker of the House and Deputy Leader of the House were all held by women.

65. Migrants, especially undocumented women and girls, were exposed to a heightened risk of human rights violations. Thus, migration was intrinsically linked to women's empowerment and the human rights of women and girls. Institutional mechanisms, legal frameworks and financing must be strengthened in order to eliminate and prevent all forms of violence against women.

66. **Ms. Horbachova** (Ukraine) said that in 2015, her country had adopted a national human rights strategy focused not only on ensuring equal rights but also on combating gender-based violence, human trafficking and slavery, as well as domestic violence. Launched in 2016 to coordinate implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), the first National Action Plan sought to eliminate cultural barriers to the full participation of women in negotiations and to work towards resolution of conflicts, peace and security at the national level.

67. The climate of physical insecurity caused by the external aggression being experienced in Ukraine had serious impacts on women. The occupation of Crimea and continuing aggression in Donbas by the Russian Federation had resulted in the internal displacement of approximately 1.8 million persons, the vast majority of whom were women. Women volunteers had mobilized in support of the military of Ukraine and were active on the frontlines, providing medical and logistical support. The knowledge, skills and experience of Ukrainian women would be vital in reaching a solution to the current crisis in and around her country. Her Government was committed to integrating the global obligations of the women, peace and security agenda into the country's domestic policies and laws and to increasing women's participation and leadership in post-conflict recovery and reconstruction.

68. **Mr. Wu** Haitao (China) said that the international community must seize the opportunity of the Sustainable Development Goals and effectively implement the commitments adopted in September 2015 at the Global Leaders' Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, which China had co-hosted with UN-Women. All parties were expected to continue to implement vigorously their commitments relating to the 12 critical areas of concern identified in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

69. Affected by weak global economic growth, developing countries were facing difficulties in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and would need further support. He urged developed countries to provide those countries with technology and funding and assist them in reducing poverty among women, improving opportunities for their employment and education and enabling them to become beneficiaries and drivers of human development and progress.

70. China was gradually implementing its pledge of $10 million to UN-Women to promote fulfilment of gender-related instruments, including the 2030 Agenda and the Goals. Other cooperation programmes were under way and China would continue to help other developing countries within the framework of South-South Cooperation.

71. As chair of the Group of Twenty, China had presided over the 2016 Women 20 (W20) Meeting, which had adopted a consensus that identified gender inclusiveness and equality as essential for strong, sustainable and balanced growth.

72. The legal system in China made ample provision for safeguarding women's rights and personal safety. His Government was launching vigorous campaigns to strengthen skills training for women and lift poor women out of poverty. China had adopted vigorous measures to improve women's health, and average life expectancy for women now stood at 77.37 years, exceeding the national average of 74.83 years.

73. **Mr. Shingiro** (Burundi) said that his country placed emphasis on the National Gender Policy, the action plan for implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and the national strategy to combat gender-based violence. Under the Constitution, women in Burundi enjoyed the right to hold public office at all levels. Rural women benefited from a microcredit, income-generating guarantee fund. The

Sexual Violence Act had been adopted as well as legislation to enforce stiffer penalties for perpetrators.

74. Free primary education had succeeded in raising the level of parity between girls and boys; improved health care during childbirth and for children under the age of five had significantly reduced the rate of infant mortality. As a step towards gender equality in employment, women were allowed to join the armed forces and the police. Burundi remained committed to building on its achievements in promoting gender equality and autonomy for women and girls. Regrettably, however, the unjust unilateral sanctions imposed on Burundi by certain partners were having negative repercussions on the population, in particular on women and girls.

75. **Mr. Taula** (New Zealand) said that within the framework of his country's National Action Plan for the Implementation of Security Council resolutions, including resolution 1325 (2000), on women, peace and security, his Government was taking practical steps to increase the participation and leadership of women and ensure their representation at all levels of decision-making in conflict resolution processes.

76. In its eighth report under the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, New Zealand had drawn attention to the significant progress it had achieved in upholding women's civil, political and economic rights. The reporting and examination process was an opportunity to identify areas for improvement. Thus, his Government had decided to prioritize education and training for women and girls; women's skills and the economy; women's leadership; and ensuring that women and girls were free from violence.

77. As part of its effort to prevent domestic violence both nationally and in the Pacific region, the Government of New Zealand had proposed an overhaul of its family violence legislation. Earlier and more effective interventions were recommended in order to keep victims safe and change perpetrator behaviour. He urged all States to intensify efforts to achieve gender equality and empower women and girls.

78. **Ms. Bellout** (Algeria) said that, since its independence, Algeria had been committed to reinforcing the principle of gender equality in its constitutions. It had acceded to all human rights conventions, had adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals, and would be reconsidering its reservations to certain provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

79. Progress had been made in national legislation, including new procedures to ensure that the Criminal Code protected women against violence. A constitutional amendment in March 2016 had given women a special status, including equal access to high-ranking Government positions. It was a continuation of the gains made by the new constitution of 2008, which had resulted in an increase in the representation of women in the People's Assembly to 31.6 per cent.

80. All sectors of society must be included in the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Government attached great importance to the involvement of women in national development, including through the creation of microenterprises and income-generating activities. Women's associations had served as effective partners in those programmes. Algeria would continue to cooperate with the United Nations and other stakeholders to achieve the targets set under the 2030 Agenda.

81. **Mr. Rattray** (Jamaica) said that his delegation welcomed the progress made in reducing violence against women and improving women's participation in economic life and decision-making, among other areas. However, structural inequalities continued to leave women at a distinct disadvantage relative to their male counterparts. Women were still responsible for the majority of unpaid care work and faced a persistent gender pay gap; they had limited opportunities for political leadership; and the risk of violence remained far too high. The commitment to eliminate violence against women and girls was not new, and as States set about their implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, they must redouble their efforts to translate words into meaningful action.

82. The Bureau of Gender Affairs in Jamaica had been working to strengthen gender mainstreaming policies and address gender-based violence. The national strategic action plan to eliminate gender-based violence 2016-2026 would be implemented in October 2016; a national shelter strategy was being developed; and consultations were under way on an anti-sexual

harassment bill. Jamaica had also ratified the ILO Domestic Workers Convention in September 2016. Trafficking of women and girls was a serious human rights violation that was exacerbated by conflict and humanitarian emergencies, and Jamaica supported efforts to prevent and combat it and support the victims.

83. In order to engage men and boys in its efforts to combat discrimination and violence and support the advancement of women, Jamaica had launched a national HeForShe campaign in July 2016, which was being championed by high-profile Jamaican celebrities such as Usain Bolt. The Prime Minster had also recently joined the Secretary-General of the United Nations in declaring himself to be a feminist.

84. **Mr. Ri** Song Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that his country had continued to take legal and practical steps to enable women to fully exercise their rights. Under the leadership of Kim Jong Un, women were playing an active role in State activities and were making great contributions to social development.

85. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea worked in close cooperation with international organizations to protect the rights of women. It had fulfilled its obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women since its accession and had withdrawn its reservations to the Convention in November 2015. It had submitted the combined second, third and fourth periodic reports on its implementation of the Convention to the treaty body in April 2016, which was a manifestation of its willingness to respect the fundamental principles of the Convention and to fulfil its obligations as a State party.

86. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea wished to take issue once again with the attitude of Japan attempting to cover up its past crimes such as the use of "comfort women" by the Japanese Army. During its occupation of Korea, Japan had forced more than 200,000 Korean women and girls to serve as sex slaves, exposing them to great pain and suffering. Although many countries were demanding that Japan should apologize and make compensation for its crimes against humanity, Japan continued to deny what it had done.

87. Furthermore, Japan had insulted former "comfort women" by referring to them as victims of human trafficking and was thwarting their registration in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Memory of the World programme. No statute of limitations was applicable to crimes against humanity. In view of its serious approach to the sexual violence committed by its peacekeepers, the United Nations should insist that Japan should make a sincere apology and provide due compensation for the crime of sexual slavery committed by its Imperial Army.

88. His delegation also wished to report that the authorities of the Republic of Korea had abducted women from his country and had refused to provide information on their fate or allow them to be repatriated. It was a crime against humanity and the United Nations should take the necessary measures to ensure those women returned to their families as soon as possible. The way the organization and international human rights mechanisms chose to respond would be a reflection of their approach to human rights protection.

89. **Ms. al-Jaber** (Bahrain) said that her country was convinced that women could make a significant contribution to its efforts to spur development, and was therefore taking determined action to empower women to participate fully in Bahrain's advancement. Women had long played a key role in her country's social and cultural spheres. A formal education system for Bahraini women had been established in 1929 and women now comprised approximately 60 per cent of students in higher education. In 2005, the Supreme Council for Women had launched a national strategy for women that involved all relevant governmental bodies and civil society organizations with a view to promoting women's advancement. The Supreme Council also oversaw a $100 million fund that provided financial support to small- and medium-sized enterprises run by women, and Bahrain had also launched programmes to promote the economic empowerment of women and increase their participation in the labour market. Women had comprised a mere 4.9 per cent of the country's workforce in 1971 but that figure had risen to 33 per cent by 2014. Women also held 51 per cent of public sector jobs.

90. Bahrain had been one of the first countries of the region to grant women the rights to vote and to stand for election. Women had played a pivotal role in the drafting of the country's National Action Charter and Bahrain, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme, had launched a comprehensive programme under the slogan "Together we can build the nation" to promote women's participation in politics. Women had won six parliamentary and municipal council seats in 2014 and a number of Bahraini women had been elected to senior positions on the world stage, including Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, who had been elected President of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly. According to a report issued by the International Labour Organization in 2016, Bahrain was the country in which the number of business enterprises run by women was increasing most rapidly. Bahrain was committed to achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda, particularly Goal 5, and had incorporated the Goals into its Government Action Plan for the period 2015 to 2018. Bahrain had also acceded to and complied with its obligations pursuant to numerous international instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

91. **Mr. Daunivalu** (Fiji) said that discrimination on the basis of gender was prohibited under the constitution of Fiji. Illustrating the effectiveness of its national gender mainstreaming policy, the country had an unprecedented number of women parliamentarians and a woman speaker of parliament for the first time, while two women were responsible for judicial appointments in the Judicial Services Commission. More women were graduating from university than ever before, and girls were benefiting from the free education policy.

92. A number of laws had been passed to address sexual and gender-based violence, which had included a requirement that police officers and other professionals report child abuse. However, new legislation had to be accompanied by a shift in attitudes, which Fiji had endeavoured to achieve by mainstreaming gender in its institutions and policies. Its activities in that regard had included working with the Inter-Parliamentary Union to bring a gender perspective into the national parliament; incorporating a gender perspective into the framework for disaster preparedness and response; and running mandatory annual training on sexual and gender-based violence for the judiciary.

93. The achievement of equality between men and women would help build a stronger nation and would lead to social and economic progress. Educating children and young people was a fundamental aspect of creating an equal society, and sharing the responsibilities of the home equally would allow men and women to share the responsibilities of employment.

94. **Mr. Otto** (Palau) said that his country was both a matrilineal and a matriarchal society; women played an important role in managing family and community affairs. The Mechesil Belau, a national women's conference that took place every year, had the authority to regulate customary activities without referral to a higher legislative body, and its scope had expanded to include many aspects of sustainable development. It had, for example, been responsible for shortening the period for funerals to reduce the burden on families and the community, and for improving food hygiene during the observance of such customs.

95. Drawing on its traditional status and its numbers, the women's conference (Mechesil Belau) also advocated for legislative change. It was credited with measures such as prohibiting prostitution, instituting the mandatory reporting of child abuse and implementing stiffer penalties for drug offences. Through the Mechesil Belau, women had been able to preserve the best and improve the rest, thereby making Palau fit for purpose as it strove to set specific targets for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5.

96. **Ms. Deer** (International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)) said that the impact of armed conflict on women could be severe and women faced systematic disadvantages. ICRC was often present in places where few other humanitarian organizations were operating and its mandate to protect and assist the victims of armed conflict allowed it unique access, including to places of detention. Women often had to cope alone as heads of household, and those whose husbands were missing frequently had no clear status under national law, which affected their access to property or guardianship of children. In addition, the usual mechanisms against violence were often

weakened in times of armed conflict, which left women and girls exposed to sexual violence.

97. Women and girls must be actively involved in decisions regarding their needs and ICRC consulted them when designing programmes, which might build on their existing coping strategies or provide them with alternatives. Such programmes included developing income-generating activities that reduced the need to send a child out to work or resort to prostitution, and helping women who wished to fetch water in groups to reduce the risk of violence by establishing timetables for doing so.

98. Lastly, ICRC reminded States of their primary obligation to meet the needs of the population under their control. It urged all States to ensure a safe environment for women and girls and minimize the harm to which they were exposed by respecting and ensuring respect for the relevant international norms and standards, in particular international humanitarian law.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

99. **Mr. Joshi** (India) said that it was ironic that a country that regulated the functioning of women in its society through medieval draconian laws was making claims about the rights of women in a pluralistic democracy such as India. Pakistan would be well served to seriously examine what ailed its women and hampered their advancement. His Government completely rejected the baseless allegations made by Pakistan about women in the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir; in fact, innocent women living there had long suffered as a result of the persistent terrorist attacks perpetrated by proxies of Pakistan. His delegation was well aware of the cynical attempts by Pakistan to pursue the diplomacy of hate through lies and deceit and did not intend to respond further to such misguided and futile efforts.

100. **Ms. Oh** Youngju (Republic of Korea) said that the accusation by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was baseless and the human rights record of that country spoke for itself. Despite repeated warnings from the international community, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had continued to pour its scarce resources into launching ballistic missiles and conducting nuclear tests in order to maintain its grip on power, while neglecting its dire human rights situation, which had been thoroughly and vividly described in the report of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

101. **Mr. Khan** (Pakistan) said that no amount of obfuscation could hide the grave, systematic and well documented human rights violations taking place in the Indian-occupied State of Jammu and Kashmir. The pellet bullets used by the occupying forces represented the most graphic manifestation of suppression, which was a travesty of justice, law and all that the civilized world stood for. The Indian atrocities had resulted in the deaths of over 90,000 innocent Kashmiris, including many women and children. The State of Jammu and Kashmir remained an internationally recognized dispute in accordance with Security Council resolutions 47 (1948), 51 (1948), 80 (1950), 91 (1951) and 122 (1957) and Pakistan rejected any insinuation that the legitimate struggle of the Kashmiri people was equivalent to terrorism as nothing more than an attempt by India to deflect attention from that struggle. Pakistan believed that the dispute needed to be settled in accordance with the Security Council resolutions in order to achieve a lasting peace in South Asia and stood ready to engage in comprehensive and meaningful dialogue with India.

102. **Mr. Ri** Song Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that South Korea was not qualified to argue about human rights in other countries; the purpose of the current meeting was to discuss women's human rights. Based on the report of the Human Rights Council of June 2016, the human rights situation in South Korea was dismal. The National Security Act had led to harsh repression; the truth of the Sewol ferry disaster had yet to be established; and children were being abused. The abduction of female citizens from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in April 2016 had appalled the world and constituted a heinous terrorist act. The South Korean authorities had detained those women in isolation for seven months, provided no information on their fate and had subjected them to physical and mental abuse, including sexual torture. It was a flagrant violation of their human rights and core international human rights instruments. The South Korean Government should abolish its National Security Act, improve its miserable human rights situation and, in particular, return the women from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to their families without delay.

103. **Ms. Oh** Youngju (Republic of Korea) said that her delegation would not respond to the preposterous arguments of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea but urged that Government to heed the requests of the international community on improving the human rights situation of its people and to comply with the relevant resolutions.

104. **Mr. Ri** Song Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that his Government categorically rejected the politicized and nonsensical arguments made by South Korea, which were not relevant to the advancement of women. The abducted citizens were ordinary women who were being held in solitary confinement, tortured and allowed no contact with the outside world. His delegation requested an explanation from South Korea.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.

United Nations A/C.3/71/SR.11

General Assembly
Seventy-first session

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Third Committee

Summary record of the 11th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 12 October 2016, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Mejía Vélez ..... (Colombia)

Contents

Agenda item 27: Advancement of women (*continued*)

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16-17653 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 27: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/71/38, A/71/209, A/71/219, A/71/223, A/71/306 and A/71/398)

1. **Mr. Tupouniua** (Tonga) said that Tonga attached great importance to national ownership and careful domestication of multilateral treaties. After receiving initial push-back, his Government was working to gather the support of all stakeholders for the ratification, domestication and implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In the meantime, it was continuing to align its policies with the Convention.

2. Gender equality was one of the seven national goals of the second Tonga Strategic Development Framework, 2015-2025. For 2016-2017, his Government was focusing on political participation, violence against women and women's economic empowerment. Recently, two women had been elected to local offices never before held by women, and a woman had been elected to the Legislative Assembly for the first time since 2005. In addition, efforts were underway to increase women's participation in the Legislative Assembly, initially by setting aside seats for them. With respect to violence against women, steps had been taken to improve the existing legislative framework, and the police had been trained in the most appropriate ways to respond to incidents of gender-related violence.

3. **Ms. Klein** (Madagascar) said that women's rights had long been a priority. Madagascar's National Development Plan 2015-2019 included programmes to strengthen social protections for women and girls, and its national social protection policy focused on them. As part of its efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, it had reworked its national plans and strategies to ensure that women gained equal access to economic resources and basic services. It had also recently amended the Nationality Code to allow children with a Malagasy mother and a foreign father to acquire Malagasy citizenship.

4. Madagascar's Independent National Human Rights Commission was empowered to question the Government on human rights violations. In addition to providing legal and psychological counselling, support centres for women victims of violence conducted community awareness campaigns. Other campaigns promoted women's equality among male leaders and boys. Madagascar had taken steps to facilitate women's access to microcredit, and it awarded scholarships to girls to increase their likelihood of staying in school. Emergency obstetric care had been improved, and traditional midwives in remote areas were being given medical training. In closing, she thanked the United Nations Fund for Population Activities and all of Madagascar's bilateral and multilateral partners for their assistance in combating early marriage and obstetric fistula.

5. **Mr. Jürgenson** (Estonia) said that the issues impeding the advancement of women were complex, plentiful and diverse. Under its Welfare Action Plan 2016-2023, Estonia would tackle gender stereotyping and adopt policies to promote gender equality in the workplace. It welcomed the assistance of non-governmental organizations, which could be instrumental in identifying and prosecuting violations of women's rights.

6. One of the Goal 5 targets was to enhance the use of information and communications technology (ICT) to promote the empowerment of women. Given the urgent need for ICT-skilled workers, it was vital to ensure that women and girls had equal access to the necessary training. Estonia commended the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) for raising and pursuing the topic of innovation, for incorporating technology into its own programmes and for supporting initiatives that encouraged women to become technology entrepreneurs. ICT could be used to help raise awareness of gender-based violence and discrimination and to provide online support for victims. Estonia had a comprehensive strategy for preventing violence and for creating better services for victims of violence, both online and offline.

7. **Ms. Gebrekidan** (Eritrea) said that Eritrean women had asserted their equality in a patriarchal society by joining in the struggle for self-determination. Because of that legacy, the promotion of women's rights and women's participation at all levels had been an important tenet of government policy since independence. Eritrea had taken a bottom-up approach to increasing women's

participation by setting quotas for women judges and administrators at the community level. As a result of priority attention, half of elementary and secondary school students were girls, and women had broader access to vocational and skills training. Women's equal participation in development activities had been critical for the achievement of various Millennium Development Goal benchmarks, and they continued to participate actively in advocating, legislating and implementing national policies, especially those relating to gender matters.

8. Eritrea had presented its report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2015. In close collaboration with the National Union of Eritrean Women, an independent grassroots organization, her Government was continuing its efforts to prevent rape and sexual harassment, to discourage underage marriage and to combat violence against women and girls, including female genital mutilation. Awareness campaigns and a legal ban had resulted in a reduction in the incidence of female genital mutilation in girls aged 5 and under from 95 per cent in 1995 to 12 per cent.

9. However, the politically motivated sanctions and Ethiopia's illegal occupation of sovereign Eritrean territories continued to hinder all of Eritrea's development activities, including the advancement of women.

10. **Ms. Rahimova** (Azerbaijan) said that Azerbaijan welcomed the commitment to address the vulnerabilities of refugee women and children expressed in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, as well as the mainstreaming of gender equality and women's empowerment in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

11. In Azerbaijan, the Criminal Code had been amended to criminalize the trafficking of women and forced and child marriages. The Government was stepping up its efforts to combat trafficking in women and children, and it had also launched a country-wide online database on violence against women. Women's representation in the National Assembly and municipal government was increasing steadily. State programmes included measures aimed at enhancing women's access to resources and opportunities, and a new public entity had recently been established to boost family businesses.

12. Azerbaijan had ratified many International Labour Organization treaties, including the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, and the Convention concerning the revision of the Maternity Protection Convention. It worked closely with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which had recognized its programmes for supporting internally displaced persons, most of whom were women and girls; the high literacy rates among women and the secondary school enrolment rate for girls.

13. **Ms. Stanescu** (Romania) said that, with respect to women's empowerment, Romania was focusing its efforts on ensuring that women had equal access to employment by addressing challenges such as reintegrating mothers into the workforce, providing child care and other supportive infrastructure and encouraging increased sharing of family responsibilities. Romania was fully committed to fighting all forms of violence against women and girls. As part of its commitment to the UN-Women HeForShe movement, it was creating an integrated system to track, report and prevent domestic violence. Following ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence earlier that year, her Government was working to transpose its provisions into domestic law and had approved the establishment of a committee on preventing and combating violence against women.

14. **Mr. Zamora Rivas** (El Salvador) said that gender equality and women's empowerment were essential for development, peace and democracy. El Salvador's 2014-2019 development plan provided for gradually reducing gender inequality and meeting women's specific interests and needs. In particular, El Salvador was committed to addressing the needs of women facing multiple forms of discrimination, including older, indigenous, disabled or refugee women and women domestic workers. It was particularly concerned about the need to protect women migrant workers. Various programmes and projects implemented since 2009 had given rural women access to more jobs, new sources of income and credit, as well as to tangible and intangible assets. However, they were far from achieving equality with men. In general, despite significant positive changes, El Salvador still faced major challenges for women's

equality and empowerment; the highest priorities were violence against women and inadequate access to justice.

15. **Mr. Tchalare** (Togo) said that in Togo free or reduced-fee education and parity measures had improved the statistics for girls in academic and vocational education, and literacy classes were being offered to more women each year. In accordance with the recommendations arising from its sixth and seventh reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, his Government had launched a series of campaigns to increase awareness of women's rights, reduce gender disparities and change attitudes and behaviour and had amended the Personal and Family Code to bring it into line with the Convention. Togo's growth and employment strategy had already improved the income and living conditions of Togolese women, and its programme to make financial services accessible to the very poor had helped more than 300,000 women. The volunteer programme for young Togolese had provided work and training for thousands of young women. Women held 15 per cent of the seats and three leadership posts in the National Assembly.

16. **Ms. Larrabee** (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)) said that global efforts to care for women and girls affected by migration, conflicts, natural disasters and other humanitarian emergencies needed to be strengthened. States had a critical opportunity to incorporate a strong gender perspective in the two global compacts to be negotiated on migration and refugees. The agreed conclusions of the sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women had called on States and other actors to address sexual and gender-based violence as an integral and prioritized part of every humanitarian response. In turn, the thirty-second International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent had adopted a resolution setting forth a number of practical actions, including encouraging IFRC to continue its research on sexual and gender-based violence in disasters and other emergencies and calling on States to strengthen their domestic legal frameworks and assess their domestic procedures, policies and plans to ensure adequate attention to such violence.

17. IFRC welcomed the emphasis on humanitarian settings in the 2030 Agenda. The incidence of preventable maternal and under-5 deaths in such settings was unacceptably high. Experience within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement showed that, when empowered and provided with essential life-saving commodities, information and training, affected communities could significantly reduce mortality risks.

18. **Mr. Carvalho Pinheiro** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said ILO had worked actively to promote women's empowerment and end violence against women by adopting a number of legally binding conventions and developing codes of conduct, management tools and guidelines. It was looking to adopt a new international standard on violence in the workplace, which harmed not only workers but also families, communities and the economy. Together with several United Nations agencies and special procedures mandate holders, it had launched SDG Alliance 8.7 to strengthen coordination among the many actors involved in combating forced labour, human trafficking, modern slavery and child labour. The joint World Bank-ILO Universal Social Protection Initiative had been formed to help to build comprehensive social protection systems that would promote women's empowerment. The ILO Domestic Workers Convention provided legal protection for domestic workers, who were predominantly women. Lastly, in the lead-up to its 100th anniversary in 2019, it had launched the Women at Work Centenary Initiative for the purpose of renewing its commitment to women's equality and identifying areas of future action.

Statements in exercise of the right of reply

19. **Mr. Mizumoto** (Japan) said that, at the previous meeting, the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had made slanderous assertions about Japan that were based on an erroneous understanding of the facts.

20. **Ms. Sukacheva** (Russian Federation), responding to a statement by the representative of Ukraine, said that Crimea's reunification with the Russian Federation had taken place in full accordance with international law. Moreover, by raising the subject in an inappropriate context, the representative had once again demonstrated that any topic could be used for strictly political purposes regardless of the issue at hand. Since the beginning of the so-called anti-terrorist

operation in South-East Ukraine, just over a million Ukrainians had fled to the Russian Federation, including Crimea. He would like to know what methodology had been used to calculate the number of "internally displaced persons" cited by the Ukrainian representative.

21. **Mr. Yaremenko** (Ukraine), speaking in Russian for the benefit of the Russian delegation, said that it was pointless to try to convince the Committee that the Russian Federation had nothing to do with the aggression against Ukraine. The General Assembly had already condemned its annexation of Crimea, and the Russian representative herself was fully aware of her Government's involvement. The Russian Federation was continuing to support and fund the conflict in his country. If it were not still sending arms, munitions and militants into Ukraine, there would be no armed conflict there and thus no counterterrorism operation. Reminding the Committee of the results of the recent investigation into the downing of the Malaysia Airlines airplane over Ukraine, he asked the Russian representative to explain how the Russian missile system had ended up in Ukrainian territory.

22. Ukraine was doing its utmost to provide for the people internally displaced by Russian actions, who had at one point totalled a million. His delegation once again called on the Russian Federation to withdraw its troops from Ukraine and stop fuelling the conflict.

23. **Mr. Ri** Song Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the Japanese representative's statement was utter nonsense. Japan should admit and apologize for its past crimes against humanity, namely, conscripting more than 8 million Koreans, massacring 1 billion others and forcing 200,000 Korean women into sexual slavery. It should also apologize for another shameful violation of human rights: prohibiting of members of the Korean resistance living in Japan from travelling to their homeland to be reunited with their families.

24. **Mr. Mizumoto** (Japan) said that his Government's position was as previously stated, and he would refrain from entering into a detailed rebuttal. Since the Second World War, Japan had consistently endeavoured to build a free and democratic State based on respect for human rights and the rule of law and had supported peace and prosperity in the Asia Pacific region. It would remain a peace-loving nation and would continue to contribute to peace and prosperity around the world.

25. **Mr. Ri** Song Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that Japan would be well advised to acknowledge State responsibility for past crimes rather than trying to cover them up.

26. **Ms. Sukacheva** (Russian Federation) urged the Ukrainian delegation to stop politicizing the discussion of the advancement of women. Also, the Ukrainian representative could respond in English, which she understood equally well.

27. **Mr. Yaremenko** (Ukraine), responding in English, said that his delegation was not politicizing the item under discussion. He had only wished to remind one delegation of General Assembly resolution 68/262 on the territorial integrity of Ukraine. The Member States had agreed to abide by the principles of the Charter and should keep their commitments.

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.

United Nations A/C.3/71/SR.12

General Assembly
Seventy-first session

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Third Committee

Summary record of the 12th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 12 October 2016, at 3 p.m.

Chair:	Ms. Mejía Vélez	(Colombia)
later:	Ms. Węgrzynowska	(Poland)

Contents

Agenda item 64: Promotion and protection of the rights of children

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children

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16-17654 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 64: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (A/71/41)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (A/71/205, A/71/206, A/71/213, A/71/253, A/71/261, A/71/277 and A/71/413)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (A/71/175)

1. **Ms. Zerrougui** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict), introducing her report (A/71/205), said that reducing the impact of armed conflict on children was a daunting task faced with serious challenges. The means and methods of warfare used by some parties to conflict had killed and maimed thousands of children and forced millions to flee in search of a safer environment. The unspeakable plight of the children in South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen illustrated the urgent need for action at all levels. There was also some encouraging progress. In Colombia, children were being separated from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia — People's Army (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejercito del Pueblo (FARC-EP)), and in Sudan and Somalia, several detained children had been released.

2. The treatment of children separated from or allegedly associated with armed groups was one of her most pressing concerns. Current national security responses were sidelining legal institutions in favour of military and other security actors. In certain situations the de facto response was to deprive civilians, including children, of their liberty outside of legal frameworks and without due process. Detention was being used to recruit and use children for intelligence gathering, which put them in grave danger and compromised their full reintegration. Arbitrary detention was also employed by some States.

3. Although some Member States faced serious threats from armed groups that committed abhorrent acts, pervasive lawlessness and human rights violations in security responses could never be justified. She was encouraged by the adoption of General Assembly resolution 70/291 on the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review, which called for fair, humane, transparent and accountable criminal justice systems designed with the rights and needs of children in mind. Children who had been recruited and used must be treated primarily as victims. Reintegration of separated children was crucial to ensuring the long-term sustainability of peace, security and development. The General Assembly and Member States should encourage Governments and other relevant actors to provide the necessary support for reintegration programmes. She proposed increasing technical and financial resources for the provision of psychosocial support to children.

4. Children were also seriously impacted by the conduct on the battlefield of some Government forces and their allies. The use of explosive weapons with wide effects in populated areas had led to large-scale incidents of children being killed or maimed and attacks on health care workers and institutions. Governments must commit to refrain from using those types of weapons in populated areas, a commitment that would merely reiterate adherence to the basic principles of international humanitarian law, such as distinction and proportionality. The progress achieved towards the protection of children was jeopardized by the increased use of militia and armed groups by Governments. Her Office had worked to train armed forces on the protection of children and to implement systems to prevent violations, especially in the recruitment and use of children. However, pro-Government groups were frequently comprised of fighters from the local community who lacked training and did not respect or even understand international humanitarian law. Those groups were recruiting and using children from their communities, and some were committing the same atrocities against boys and girls as the armed groups they were supposed to counteract. The international community must make a more compelling case to Governments that heavy-handed responses were dangerously counterproductive to their own interests of security, development and prosperity. One of the main drivers of recruitment for armed groups was violations of international law by Government forces or their allies. Such violations and the lack of accountability only served to perpetuate conflict.

5. The outcome document of the recent high-level plenary meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants had included strong commitments to protect the human rights of all refugees, including

girls. Ensuring that all refugee children were receiving education within a few months of arrival was a particularly welcome target, and she urged the international community to translate those words into action. She hoped that there would be a strong focus on the rights of children affected by conflict in discussions on the global compact on refugees and that there would be other forums to address the plight of internally displaced children as well. Children affected by armed conflicts, including internally displaced children, could also be assisted within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals. The strong interest in their implementation could be harnessed to ensure the necessary capacity and financing. Education in emergencies and support to children disabled by conflict should be a particular focus in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

6. Some progress had been made, especially in the context of the Children, Not Soldiers campaign, but it was not enough. Serious progress could not be achieved without prioritizing conflict resolution and prevention, which was the only way to significantly reduce the number of violations against children. Without that focus, there would only be incremental progress that could easily be wiped out with a change in the conflict dynamics.

7. **Ms. Marteles Gutiérrez del Alamo** (Spain) said that her Government was disappointed that normative progress had not resulted in better protection for civilians in conflict. Measures to avoid or minimize impact on civilians were ignored and, in the worst cases, deliberately violated. Children were particularly vulnerable in armed conflict, especially girls, refugees and displaced children. Attacks on schools and hospitals, which were becoming more frequent, and sexual abuses perpetrated by Blue Helmets gave particular cause for concern.

8. Spain was a member of the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict and had helped to draft Security Council resolution 2286 (2016) condemning attacks on doctors and hospitals. Her Government supported the inclusion of cross-cutting protection for children in the mandates of peacekeeping operations and adequate training for peacekeepers in the protection of minors. In addition, a plan of action should be established that would cover demobilization to reintegration, with special attention to girls. It also advocated for strengthening the capacities of legal and judicial systems in affected countries, as accountability was crucial. The Security Council should refer the most serious violations of international humanitarian law to the International Criminal Court, and children used by terrorist or armed groups should be seen as victims and have access to rehabilitation programmes.

9. **Ms. Brooke** (United States of America) said that while there was significant support in the international community for the Children, Not Soldiers campaign, gaps still remained in systemic prevention and accountability for the recruitment and use of children. She asked the Special Representative what best practices and suggestions she could share in order to address the gap more effectively.

10. **Ms. Nescher-Stuetzel** (Liechtenstein) said that the annex to the most recent report had been amended, under pressure from one of the parties involved. As changes had also been made in the past, she asked the Special Representative how she evaluated the independence of her mandate and whether she could share any ideas for ensuring that similar instances would not be repeated in the future. Parties to conflict used displacement to exploit the vulnerability of children and commit violations, such as human trafficking. She would like to hear more about how children, and in particular unaccompanied minors, could best be protected from human trafficking and modern slavery.

11. **Ms. Bardaoui** (Tunisia) said that her delegation supported the call of the Special Representative for further mobilization in support of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. Despite the progress achieved in the past 20 years, many difficulties remained, and violence against children had only increased. The Special Representative should provide detailed results, as pertained to children, from the sixth high-level retreat on the promotion of peace, security and stability in Africa, convened by the African Union, on the theme "Terrorism, mediation and non-State armed groups" and to share her vision of the work that should be undertaken in that regard.

12. **Ms. Abushawesh** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the Palestinian people and their children had endured untold suffering and misery for 50 years living under the brutal military occupation.

Sadly, conditions worsened rapidly on a daily basis, especially for children, as a result of the practices and policies of Israel, the occupying Power. It would be helpful to discuss ways in which the international community could provide much-needed protection for Arab children living under Israeli occupation and what should be done to ensure accountability for the violations committed with complete impunity by the occupying Power against the Palestinian children. She also asked whether the Special Representative planned to visit to the occupied State of Palestine.

13. **Ms. Al-Iemimi** (Qatar) said that, despite the progress made in the past 20 years, there were an increasing number of violations in countries suffering from armed conflict. Her delegation appreciated the recommendations of the Special Representative to encourage efforts to rehabilitate children suffering from armed conflict and stressed the provision of education in emergencies. The Government had launched a number of initiatives in areas that suffered from conflicts and wars. It had assisted in the training of Syrian refugees and contributed to a trust fund to educate Syrian children, thereby providing the necessary skills and training to allow Syrians to contribute constructively to their societies. Qatar played an active role in the global study on children deprived of liberty and the United Nations Study on Violence against Children. She would like more information about the best means of protecting the basic rights of children in armed conflict, especially access to education.

14. **Ms. Dravec** (Slovenia) said that her Government had endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration in 2016 and, in order to promote and address the rights of children displaced by conflict, had continued its support for the physical and psychological rehabilitation of Syrian children in Lebanon and Jordan. A special worksheet entitled "Children refugees" had been created for schoolchildren in Slovenia in order to raise their awareness of the rights of child refugees and create an atmosphere of understanding, acceptance and inclusion of children seeking refuge in Slovenia.

15. The Children, Not Soldiers campaign had proven to be successful, but it would soon end and serious concerns still remained. The campaign was strongly supported by Member States and other stakeholders, and Government commitments had led to a reduction in verified cases of recruitment and use of children. She would like to hear how the activities of the campaign would continue after its final year.

16. **Ms. Sommerstein** (United Kingdom) said that her Government was pleased to note that more than 8,000 child soldiers had been released in 2015 and welcomed the decision by Sudan to sign an action plan under the Children, Not Soldiers campaign in March 2016. Despite the progress made, some armed groups remained resistant to international pressure. The international community must therefore continue to find innovative and practical ways to assist countries and parties in the full implementation of their respective action plans while continuing to address those who persisted in committing violations against children.

17. The Government strongly condemned the allegations of abuse and sexual exploitation of children by United Nations peacekeepers and personnel. The rights of children within peacekeeping operations must be strengthened to prevent such violations and abuses. The United Kingdom supported the action of the Secretary-General to repatriate military and police troops from peacekeeping missions when there was credible evidence of widespread and systematic cases of sexual exploitation and abuse or when States had failed to hold perpetrators to account.

18. **Ms. Jazukevičiūtė** (Lithuania) said that her Government and welcomed the progress achieved during the past two decades under the Children, Not Soldiers campaign, in particular concerning monitoring and reporting mechanisms as well as maintaining a constant dialogue with relevant stakeholders. Nevertheless, serious challenges remained. The treatment of children who had been captured and faced prolonged detention by non-State armed groups gave cause for concern. Children involved in armed conflicts were victims and should be entitled to full protection under international human rights law. Their reintegration into society was essential for building sustainable peace and security. She asked the Special Representative to suggest additional steps that Member States should take to introduce alternatives to detention and what additional support and resources were needed to ensure the reintegration of children.

19. Her Government was alarmed that children were still being recruited and used as soldiers in armed conflicts by non-State armed groups in places like the Syrian Arab Republic and Ukraine, in direct violation of international law. In 2015, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine had reported that separatists of the Donetsk People's Republic, backed by the Russian Federation, recruited children into armed youth groups and used them to man checkpoints and gather intelligence. She would like to know what challenges impeded engagement with armed groups to end that practice.

20. **Ms. Saran** (South Africa) said that her delegation commended the Special Representative for addressing the attacks on health care and protected personnel. Under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Government of South Africa was a champion of that issue and had placed great importance on the protection of health care, health personnel and infrastructure. She asked how best to strengthen respect for international humanitarian law, with respect to children in armed conflict.

21. **Ms. Wilson** (Australia) said that more must be done to address the recruitment of children by non-State armed groups. In her report, the Special Representative had noted particular concern for the proliferation of actors involved in armed conflicts and the fact that many of those groups had persistently recruited or used children for many years. The report had also highlighted significant gaps in the prevention of and accountability for recruitment and use of children. The International Criminal Court could play a role when national authorities were unable or unwilling to investigate and prosecute such crimes. She asked what were the greatest constraints on the United Nations, in either resources or mandate, inhibiting the protection of the rights of children in armed conflict.

22. **Mr. de la Mora Salcedo** (Mexico) said that the mandate of the Special Representative had achieved significant progress over the past 20 years. Nevertheless, many troubling challenges persisted, especially in protracted armed conflicts. His delegation shared the concerns of the Special Representative with regard to the increase in forced displacements of minors, the use of extreme violence and the recruitment of children by non-State armed groups. The interests of children must be given the utmost priority in all cases. He asked whether there was a link between the Human Rights Up Front initiative of the Secretary-General and the prevention of violence against children in armed conflict.

23. **Mr. Ruiz Blanco** (Colombia) said that his Government commended the Special Representative for her work in the course of the Havana peace process to successfully remove boys and girls from the ranks of FARC-EP. The Government of Colombia reiterated its total commitment to seeking peace and would continue to work tirelessly until there was a national consensus to achieve a stable and lasting peace. The Government sought to release and reintegrate all children involved in the armed conflict and to effectively implement guarantees of non-repetition.

24. The task force established under Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) had completed its review ahead of schedule. It was important for Colombia to receive feedback from that process on possible violations of the rights of children so that the relevant authorities could take appropriate measures.

25. **Ms. Kirianoff Crimmins** (Switzerland) said that her delegation shared the concern with regard to the increasing number of systematic attacks against hospitals and schools in a number of armed conflicts, which seemed to suggest a deliberate strategy on the part of some parties to conflict. Those attacks constituted a serious violation of international humanitarian law, and Switzerland called on all parties to conflict to respect their obligations. She asked how the mandate might be affected by Security Council resolution 2286 (2016) as it pertained to the protection of medical missions.

26. The international community must identify and implement solutions to assist children displaced by armed conflicts. It would be helpful to hear the views of the Special Representative on the possibility of including a specific focus on children in the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration and the global compact on refugees, to be designed in the course of the next two years.

27. **Ms. Zerrougui** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict) said that she was relieved to see many delegations providing support to the mandate because the Member

States were the ones who could help it deliver results. In response to questions concerning the Children, Not Soldiers campaign, she had never expected the campaign to end the recruitment of children, even by Government forces, in just two years. The goal, rather, had been to bring attention to the issue and create momentum for change. Consensus had been reached among all Member States on the recruitment of children. In addition, all Member States on the list had signed an action plan and were working with her mandate on implementation. There were still challenges and setbacks, for instance, in Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen, but the legitimacy of the mandate was no longer questioned. The most important best practice was to identify gaps and determine why children joined armed groups. It was important to have a roadmap in place to identify what had been accomplished and what was still lacking. A lack of birth registration or age verification in recruitment centres; gaps in the legal framework, with no definition of a child or criminalization of crimes committed against children; or competing priorities, such as a lack of capacity or lack of expertise, were among the challenges identified. It was important to have meaningful dialogue with the police, intelligence agencies and the military, because they could make a difference.

28. Occasionally, States were angry with their continued inclusion on the list despite the progress made. For example, despite the policies implemented by the Government in Myanmar, children were still finding their way into the military.

29. Her mandate also advocated for the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict as a means of addressing gaps in legislation. A legal obligation under international law legitimized the work of the mandate on the ground. In her visit to Puntland, Somalia, for example, the argument had been made to her that children were considered adults at the age of 15 under Muslim law. FARC-EP in Colombia also considered children to be adults at the age of 15.

30. Once the Government was committed and the necessary tools put in place, it was possible to address the non-State actors. Thirty-two non-State actors currently operated within the seven countries on the list, owing to a lack of capacity, the lack of a legal framework and the legitimization of recruiting children. Therefore, establishing the best practices with the Government would facilitate the work with non-State actors. The mandate was already working to develop action plans with some non-State actors, with the consent of the Government. For example, the mandate had worked with FARC-EP to determine three guiding principles in the peace agreement: to take into account the best interest of the child, to consider children as victims and to prioritize their reintegration. She hoped to use the Colombian peace agreement as a model of best practices for future efforts. There was much work to be done with regard to non-State actors, and the mandate strove to engage with them whenever possible, but some were not willing.

31. Following the end of the Children, Not Soldiers campaign, her mandate would continue to work with any State that still needed support, not just those on the list. Gaps must be identified early to prevent problems in the future; the mandate thus collaborated with regional institutions, such as the African Union, the Arab League and the European Union.

32. **Ms. Lindner** (Austria) said that the report covered the protection challenges posed by violent extremism and underlined the need to treat children associated with armed groups, including those engaged in violent extremism, as victims rather than security threats. The accountability of children who had perpetrated terrorism-related offenses needed be pursued in a way that fulfilled their specific needs and rights, fostered reintegration and prevented recidivism. She would like to hear more about best practices in capacity-building for law enforcement, justice systems and the child welfare sector.

33. **Ms. Sukacheva** (Russian Federation) said that her delegation was pleased with the success of the Children, Not Soldiers campaign, but felt that the major problem continued to be the actions of non-State armed groups. In the most recent report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on children in armed conflict, most of the parties listed in the annex were non-State armed groups. Unfortunately, action plans prepared with the assistance of the United Nations by parties to a conflict were no guarantee that the situation affecting children had actually improved. She asked what steps were most effective to normalize the situation on the ground.

34. **Mr. Al-Kumaim** (Yemen) said that his Government had taken many steps to combat violence and the recruitment and use of children and had signed an action plan with the United Nations in 2014. The current situation, however, had interrupted the work on that campaign, and he wondered whether there was a way to continue the work in light of the ongoing conflict.

35. His Government was attempting to include children in negotiations in the hope that their presence might lead to peace and build confidence. The protection of children and schools was vital, and the direct cooperation between the mandate of the Special Representative and the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Yemen was essential to combating the recruitment and use of children in the armed conflict. He hoped that the expertise gained by the Special Representative in the peace negotiations in Colombia could be applied to Yemen.

36. **Mr. Qassem Agha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation wondered why references to the coalition led by Saudi Arabia had been removed from the report of the Special Representative, as that country was responsible for the killing of thousands of children in Yemen. The Royal Saudi Arabian Air Force had just recently carried out a massacre in a civilian area. He also wondered why the Israeli army was not mentioned in the report, as it was responsible for the killing of children in occupied Palestine. He wished to stress that there were a number of Syrian refugees, especially children, living in the refugee centre in Qatar, despite reports to the contrary.

37. **Ms. Tasuja** (Estonia) said that her delegation recognized the long-term effects of attacks on health care, especially in the prolonged process of rebuilding a staff of skilled doctors and nurses and a physical infrastructure. However, the issue of children in armed conflict was also a severe, ongoing problem where a quick response could save lives. More information on the most practical, short-term solutions and contributions that could be made by Member States immediately would be welcome. It would also be helpful to elaborate on the ways in which children who had been accused of involvement in non-State armed groups could be reintegrated into their communities effectively.

38. **Mr. Rohland** (Germany) said that the international community must continue to renew mechanisms for the protection of children in armed conflict and not allow such mechanisms to become stale or unduly politicized. The increasing number of attacks on schools and hospitals must be investigated, and perpetrators of war crimes must be held to account. He asked how regional organizations could contribute to the implementation of action plans and assist in bringing perpetrators into compliance with international obligations.

39. **Ms. Enesen** (Norway) said that conflict adversely affected the development of children, especially when they were denied their right to attend school. Her delegation urged all States to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration, an important and practical tool to reduce attacks on schools and the military use of schools. Schools were also increasingly being used to recruit child soldiers in several countries in Africa. She asked how that growing trend could be curbed and for suggestions on how to encourage more States to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration.

40. **Ms. Elhassan** (Sudan) said that her Government had always been committed to protecting children, and extensive efforts had been carried out to ensure that the rights of children were well protected, including the establishment of an integrated legal system for justice, a special unit within the police department dedicated to child and family protection, a unit within the armed forces for the protection of human rights and a special unit to combat violence against women and children under the Ministry of Welfare and Social Security. In addition, the Government had signed an action plan with the United Nations to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children in March 2016, and the implementation process had already begun. The 21 children who had been detained by the Government for their association with a rebel armed group had been released in September and would receive proper rehabilitation in order to be reintegrated with their families.

41. She thanked the Special Representative for her efforts to protect children in Sudan and renewed the commitment of her Government to implement the plan of action and to cooperate with the Special Representative in order to promote and protect the rights of children.

42. **Mr. O'Brien** (Observer for the European Union) said that the report underscored the necessity of ensuring education during times of armed conflicts. In Syria, in places like eastern Aleppo, recent aerial attacks had not only led to the postponement of the school year but had also halved student attendance. He would like to hear more about the long-term effects on society as a whole when children were denied an education and what could be done to ensure safe access to education for children in armed conflict.

43. As the reintegration of children was crucial to ensure the long-term sustainability of peace and security, he asked what specific measures could be taken by Member States, giving special attention to the reintegration of girls, and what were recommended alternatives to the systematic detention of children allegedly associated with non-State armed groups.

44. **Ms. Garcia Gutierrez** (Costa Rica) said that she would like to know what measures States could implement to ensure that children who had been recruited by armed groups could be reintegrated into their communities and what special attention must be given to the needs of girls.

45. **Ms. Coroa** (Portugal) said that her Government wished to reiterate its full support for the mandate, which had been carried out with integrity and independence. The increasingly complex emerging and protracted conflicts had devastating impacts on children. Given that ensuring education for all children at all levels in emergency situations was essential to creating hope for a peaceful future, she asked how the international community could develop an emergency mechanism to ensure access to education at all levels in areas of conflict.

46. **Ms. Bellout** (Algeria) said that her delegation would like to hear more about the challenges confronting the work of the Special Representative in the field and suggestions for overcoming those obstacles.

47. **Ms. Sage** (New Zealand) said that her delegation was pleased that the report had included children with disabilities and mentioned the need to focus on that particular group. It had also reflected on the successes of the past 20 years. Looking ahead to the next 20 years, she asked what key challenges would arise both for children in conflict and post-conflict settings and for the mandate, and what Member States could do to better anticipate and respond to those challenges and support a robust mandate moving forward.

48. **Ms. Gebrekidan** (Eritrea) asked how the international community could end the persistent recruitment of children from refugee camps by armed groups and what measures could be taken by host Governments.

49. **Mr. Mikayilli** (Azerbaijan) thanked the Special Representative for raising the issue of internally displaced children, who were just as vulnerable as refugees, and called for continued focus on those children.

50. **Ms. Zerrougui** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict) said that, with regard to education, it had sometimes not been the first priority in the past because the parents affected by conflict had been illiterate. In the current conflicts, displaced persons and refugees were requesting access to education for their children and diplomas as proof of completion so that children could continue to have access to education once the conflicts had ended. With millions of displaced and refugee children, it was important to have alternatives in place to allow for the continuation of education even in emergency situations. The international community must assess the situation on the ground, evaluate the existing expertise, identify gaps and determine how best to provide support. Accountability was vital to protecting children, schools, education and health care. If the international community addressed the violations and held perpetrators to account, there would be fewer attacks and violations. Many of the attacks were due to widespread impunity and lack of control over the militia, not tactics of war. To end that practice, States needed to sign the Safe Schools Declaration, prohibit military use of schools and make it clear that attacks and violations against schools were not allowed.

51. With regard to alternatives to detention, regional organizations helped to provide Member States with the necessary expertise and best practices, such as a standard operating procedure for handing over children to protection actors. A number of children were detained by the military in an effort to gain intelligence, and many had died in detention because humanitarian workers could not gain access to them and the military did not have the capacity to feed them.

The mandate had been working with UNICEF and other partners to put in place the tools and mechanisms to facilitate a quick handover of children to protection actors.

52. With regard to administrative detention within law enforcement, detaining children was a violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, under which detention was considered an exception to be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time. Punitive detention was not a solution. In her experience as a juvenile judge, she had seen that all children could be reintegrated, even in the most complicated cases. With targeted programmes and knowledge of the existing expertise, the international community could work to ensure that detention was not an option.

53. Resources must be invested in education, reintegration, child protection and legislation to hold accountable violators of the rights of children. Those resources were essential to peace and stability. The biggest challenge for the United Nations was having sufficient funding and, occasionally, the expertise on the ground. When Member States prioritized those issues and supported the mandate, it legitimized the work and helped to address the challenges. Another challenge was in working with people who were not interested in their image, in peace or in dialogue, because they did not have a political future. When her mandate could not help directly, she went to those who had influence and could make a difference.

54. Trafficking was another issue facing children in armed conflict. Girls were trafficked, abused, sexually abused and married early. Children who had lost hope in the camps could be used by gangs and criminals. Trafficking must therefore be addressed and included in the response to violations affecting children in conflict.

55. **Ms. Santos País** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children), introducing her report (A/71/206), said that the international community had a responsibility to prioritize the elimination of violence against children in the policy agenda of every State. To that end, her Office had launched the High Time to End Violence against Children initiative in partnership with other United Nations agencies. The initiative was also complemented by the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children and the SDG Alliance 8.7 to end child labour. It was high time to translate commitments into action and to create a culture of respect for the rights of children and zero tolerance for violence. The recommendations in the United Nations Study on Violence against Children were still as relevant as they had been in 2006. In addition, the experience gained in the past 10 years and the important initiatives being promoted in Member States provided a solid foundation to make a difference in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

56. More than 90 countries had established a comprehensive national policy agenda to end violence against children, and more than 50 countries had enacted a clear prohibition of all forms of violence against children. Implementation of those policies required strong monitoring and accountability mechanisms. The capacity of States to gather and analyse data in order to make informed decisions must be enhanced. Accurate and disaggregated data was vital to identifying gaps and inequities and areas where greater investment was needed. Data systems in many parts of the world had been consolidated, and important household surveys had been conducted in various regions.

57. The report addressed the special risks faced by children in detention, and she urged Member States to support the global study on children deprived of liberty, which had been requested by the Third Committee in 2014 and would provide the international community with a strong opportunity to work together in order to ensure the rights of those children to liberty, security and effective protection from violence.

58. The report also highlighted the plight of the many millions of children who were fleeing their homes as a result of violence, political instability, breakdown of society or conflicts. In most cases, children were not referred to the appropriate child protection authorities and therefore lacked access to age- and gender-sensitive protection services, as well as information to facilitate family tracing or to seek redress for the violence they had suffered. In many cases, they were deprived of liberty rather than provided the nurturing environment to which they were entitled, and their development and protection were put at risk. It was imperative and urgent to safeguard the rights of those

children, prioritize their best interests, bring an end to their detention and ensure a friendly, safe and secure environment, in accordance with the Standard Minimum Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of Liberty and the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants.

59. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on protecting children from bullying (A/71/213), she said that the impact of any form of violence on the development and well-being of children was pervasive, serious and long-lasting. In the case of bullying and cyberbullying, that impact was exacerbated by a deep sense of fear, loneliness and helplessness. Bullying was one of the top concerns for children, as evidenced by both the testimony that she heard in her missions and the research conducted by leading experts across regions. More than 100,000 children had been surveyed for the UNICEF "U-Report", with which her Office had been pleased to collaborate. Some children were more frequently targeted, including those with disabilities, on the move, from disadvantaged backgrounds or out of school, as well as those who were marginalized because of their appearance or because they were perceived as having a gender identity different from what was seen as the norm.

60. There were significant national experiences and sound evidence to inform action to address the challenges, and it was imperative to bridge the persistent empathy gap and raise public awareness. Parents and caregivers needed assistance to recognize warning signs and determine how to respond, develop communication skills to support child victims and practice non-violent parenting in order to model positive behaviour. Children must be empowered to prevent and address bullying, and those most at risk needed to be supported with special protection measures. It was crucial to involve children in anti-bullying discussions and initiatives, reinforce their sense of responsibility for their actions and respect towards others, enhance their skills and confidence to stand up to bullying and feel reassured and supported when they chose to report a case and seek help. School and community programmes remained indispensable to mobilizing all stakeholders in order to uphold human rights and respect for diversity, ensure prompt action when violent behaviour occurred and monitor progress.

61. States must protect children and their rights through a comprehensive, well-coordinated and well-funded policy framework, sound legislation and investment in reliable, disaggregated data. More work was needed to promote lasting change in the attitudes and behaviours that put children at risk in order to develop internationally comparable indicators and monitoring methodologies and to fill knowledge gaps. Although the achievements of the past ten years were encouraging, the international community must be steadfast and act with a deep sense of urgency.

62. *Ms. Węgrzynowska (Poland), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

63. **Mr. Araújo Prado** (Brazil) said that Brazil and the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) States had adopted a regional plan on violence against children that aligned with the 2030 Agenda. At the request of MERCOSUR, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights had issued an advisory opinion on migrant children in 2014, which had established the obligations of States to guarantee protection for migrant children, including protection from any violence that they might be subjected to within their country of origin or destination.

64. Brazil fully supported the United Nations global study on children deprived of liberty and encouraged all States to adopt the Standard Minimum Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of Liberty as a normative framework and establish effective monitoring systems for detention facilities that held children in order to prevent abuses, investigate incidents and assess conditions of detention. He asked the Special Representative how Member States could support the efforts to further the global study and how the global study would approach the issue of migrant children.

65. **Mr. Nuno** (Spain) said that children who were free from violence were the best guarantee of inclusive and open societies in the future. In 2015, his Government had implemented important legislative reforms, including a law to modify the protection system for children and adolescents. It had included a broad and comprehensive definition of violence, as proposed in general comment No. 13 (2011) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The law also considered the establishment of a national registry of sex offenders and a procedure to provide security forces and law enforcement officers with international

notifications about individuals with criminal records of that nature. The legislative reforms were the result of greater social awareness of the mistreatment of children, and he asked how to continue to make progress in increasing awareness for types of violence that were less visible, such as cyberbullying and psychological violence.

66. **Ms. Tasuja** (Estonia) said that her delegation commended the Special Representative for her work in the implementation of target 16.2 under Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals to eliminate all forms of violence against children. Her Government remained highly committed to the contributions that the Information and Communications Technology Section made to the human rights of children in regard to issues such as free speech and awareness-raising. According to the report, an online platform had been created under the High Time to End Violence against Children initiative in order to provide information and resources for the support and monitoring of progress in global efforts to end all forms of violence against children. She would like to know whether the platform was being used effectively and properly.

67. The report also mentioned that the hidden nature of violence made it difficult to collect data and measure its impact on children. She wondered if there were ways to expand the relationship between national monitoring mechanisms and children.

68. **Ms. McElwaine** (Observer for the European Union) said that the report outlined measures that had been taken to monitor juvenile detention centres and implement changes in juvenile justice systems and yet, despite those reforms, serious violations had been documented. She asked the Special Representative to elaborate on the recommendation that children should be free to raise concerns and make complaints without the threat of retaliation.

69. The European Union was interested to know whether the High Time to End Violence against Children initiative was receiving the support it needed from Governments and other stakeholders, as well as the level of engagement of civil society organizations, and how the initiative would interact with the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children and the SDG Alliance 8.7 to end child labour. In addition, she asked for more information on the challenges faced by refugee and migrant children along their journey and on the threat of violence that they often faced.

70. **Mr. de la Mora Salcedo** (Mexico) said that a large number of children and adolescents were currently living with violence in Mexico, including physical, sexual and psychological violence, as well as discrimination and abandonment. His Government therefore reaffirmed its commitment to their protection and had joined the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children, which aimed to increase the visibility of those minors most vulnerable to violence by promoting the participation of various actors in the design and implementation of protection measures. It would be helpful to hear what good practices had been identified that would help to bring attention to minors who were in conflict with the law or involved in judicial processes to avoid their internment in detention centres.

71. **Mr. Heinzer** (Switzerland) said that Switzerland had pledged to provide an expert to assist the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in carrying out the global study on children deprived of liberty, and he requested an update on its current status, in particular the status of its financing. He also asked how the application of the 2030 Agenda, in particular target 16.2, would be monitored and how the global study could assist in that objective.

72. **Ms. Coroa** (Portugal) said that breaking the silence was instrumental to changing attitudes that condoned violence against children. Given that data could play a crucial role in preventing, understanding and combating violence, she asked the Special Representative to identify critical measures that must be implemented to achieve that change, and to share some of the recent initiatives and developments taken at the regional level to assist those groups of children who were especially vulnerable to bullying and other forms of violence.

73. **Ms. Al-Temimi** (Qatar) said that her Government had supported the inclusion of target 16.2 in the 2030 Agenda in order to move towards a world free from fear. The Doha Declaration, adopted at the thirteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, had integrated children and youth issues in judiciary reform. She asked how the international community could contribute to the global study on children deprived of liberty with a view to achieving effective outcomes aligned with the 2030 Agenda.

74. With regard to the statement made by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, Qatar had launched an initiative to assist Syrian refugees in developing vocational skills; it was not a training centre. Qatar had received more than 60,000 refugees who all benefited from the same rights as its citizens.

75. **Ms. Lindner** (Austria) said that her Government welcomed the efforts of the Special Representative, together with UNICEF, to mobilize support for the global study on children deprived of liberty and looked forward to the results. The preparatory process having laid the foundations for the global study, it would be interesting to hear what opportunities and challenges should be highlighted.

76. **Ms. Cid Carreño** (Chile) said that her Government was committed to eliminating all forms of violence, as set out in the 2030 Agenda, and was undertaking the necessary changes to its national legislation to bring it in line with the Convention the Rights of the Child and the recommendations made by the Special Representative in the course of her visit in 2015. A bill currently before the legislature provided for the protection of children from all forms of violence, and children could only be deprived of liberty in exceptional cases.

77. In partnership with the Office of the Special Representative and UNICEF, the Government was organizing a conference, to be held in November 2016, in Santiago, Chile, on crime prevention and the reintegration of adolescents in conflict with criminal law within the framework of the global study on children deprived of liberty.

78. **Ms. Enesen** (Norway) said that her Government welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on protecting children from bullying and endorsed its recommendations. Child participation and contributions must be at the heart of efforts to combat bullying. Bullying was demeaning and could lead to serious health issues for affected children, and cyberbullying raised new challenges that needed to be addressed, both at the national and international level. She asked the Special Representative to elaborate on effective measures to fight cyberbullying, and how States could best support the global study on children deprived of liberty.

79. **Ms. Omiya** (Japan) said that, in order to create a society in which children could grow up healthy and unaffected by violence, social services must be improved and high-quality education promoted. As part of its international commitments, Japan had provided financial aid to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that assisted developing countries in such areas as maternal and child health, welfare services and education. The international community must consider the many forms of violence against children in order to respond effectively. As the number of children using the Internet grew every year, violence perpetrated on the Internet was also increasing, such as cyberbullying and child pornography. Although the Government was advocating for the safe use of the Internet with children and their guardians, it was uncertain how best to protect children from those forms of violence and asked for suggestions from the Special Representative.

80. **Ms. Kwan** (Canada) asked the Special Representative to identify the main gaps in the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, whether improvement could be seen in the support services provided to child victims of violence to assist in their recovery and development and whether there were gaps in the way that Member States addressed preventing violence, sanctioning perpetrators and helping victims to recover.

81. **Ms. Dravec** (Slovenia) said that at the national level, the law to prevent family violence was being amended to include the prohibition of corporal punishment and a new programme for children and youth was being created in accordance with the provisions of the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021). At the international level, Slovenia continued to actively support the "Our Rights" project to provide human rights education to children.

82. The Global Partnership and Fund to End Violence against Children, launched in July 2016, had been a step towards reaching the goals set forth in the 2030 Agenda for a world of peaceful, just and inclusive societies that were free from fear and violence, and she asked what steps could be taken at the international level to accelerate progress in reaching target 16.2.

83. **Ms. Santos Pais** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children) said that Member States had the primary responsibility

for combating violence against children, and the international community could only make a difference and increase momentum by working together to address the problems that persisted.

84. In response to questions concerning the global study on children deprived of liberty, the number of children currently deprived of liberty was unknown. The global study would therefore provide an opportunity to document good practices and establish a data system. It would also identify who was deprived of liberty, where, in what conditions, for what reasons and for how long. Above all, it would provide the necessary evidence to prevent deprivation of liberty and invest in non-custodial alternatives. She had facilitated the Inter-Agency Task Force to move forward with the global study, which had also received support from a number of NGOs and community organizations and benefited from an excellent cross-regional research network, the contributions of leading experts and the latest evidence in the field. It had been a priority to ensure that the global study would be as comprehensive as possible and use the definition of deprivation of liberty agreed upon in the Standard Minimum Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of Liberty and the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which would allow for the inclusion of children who were deprived of liberty when awaiting a decision concerning their status as migrants, asylum seekers or refugees, as well as children who were stateless, in administrative detention or in military custody. There were also significant challenges. The global study had been requested by the General Assembly with the qualifier that it was to be funded from voluntary contributions, which meant that it was very much dependent on the goodwill of the international community. Despite the willingness to move forward, it would be very difficult to take tangible steps without financial support from Member States.

85. The 2030 Agenda, which had united development and human rights for the first time, provided an opportunity to capitalize on the experience and knowledge gained from the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, as well as lessons learned in the follow-up process to the recommendations of the United Nations Study on Violence against Children. A number of the Governments that had volunteered to be the first participants to implement the 2030 Agenda were putting in place important structures, promoting coordination, developing policy frameworks and taking legal steps. The further implementation of the 2030 Agenda could be promoted based on what had been learned by those first participants. Despite the discussion at the high-level political forum on sustainable development, however, the 2030 Agenda included very few references to children and only one reference to violence against children. One of the key lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goals had been that countries affected by violence lagged behind, with higher rates of child mortality, malnutrition and children out of school. Violence was a core dimension in the Sustainable Development Goals and must be placed at their centre.

86. In response to questions concerning data, some States did not have the needed tools and methodologies in place. Indicators had already been established to assess physical, psychological and sexual violence against children as well as trafficking, and the UNICEF multiple indicator cluster survey was already employed in more than 70 countries.

87. In response to questions concerning cyberbullying and other less-recognized forms of violence against children, the international community must begin by collaborating with children. Children must be alerted to the risks, and parents must be provided with support to learn how to communicate with their children about their online lives and learn how to surf the Internet together.

88. **Ms. Burapachaisri** (Thailand) said that her Government appreciated the invaluable support of the Special Representative in the formulation and implementation of the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Children. She asked how such a regional plan could promote progress in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals related to children.

89. **Ms. Johnston** (United States of America) said that her delegation encouraged Member States to collaborate with the Special Representative on further data collection and research on violence against children, as the realization of target 16.2 of the 2030 Agenda would require significant collaboration and commitment from all Member States. All Governments

must do their part to reduce the alarming numbers of children who had endured some form of violence. Individuals also held some responsibility and must be educated in order to speak up and act once alerted to abuses committed against children. The international community must work together to ensure that there were strong institutions and mechanisms for countering those abuses.

90. Children must be empowered with easily understandable, age-sensitive and culturally appropriate information about their rights. She asked the Special Representative to share any best practices concerning how countries had provided accessible and comprehensible information to children.

91. **Ms. Garcia Gutierrez** (Costa Rica) said that the report mentioned that thousands of children were detained for indeterminate periods of time without access to justice, unable to challenge their detention and deprived of protection; displaced and migrant children were more vulnerable. In Costa Rica, protocols had been established to guarantee all rights of children, regardless of their migration status. The Government believed that children should not be deprived of liberty under any circumstance. She would like to hear more on measures to prevent the detention of children and discuss the concrete measures that had been taken to protect children currently in detention.

92. **Ms. Zahir** (Maldives) said that nurturing children and ensuring their full potential led not only to social progress and prosperity, but was also the only way to bring about real change. In the Maldives, the utmost importance was placed on the development and safety of children, and there were a number of laws that addressed victims of violence, with specific laws enacted to end violence against children and ensure their protection, notably laws against domestic violence, sexual offences and trafficking in persons.

93. The Maldives had acceded to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Government was in the final stages of updating national laws for the protection of children's rights in order to align them with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Despite much progress in strengthening the national legislative framework, difficulties persisted in attempts to break down social and cultural barriers and raise awareness to end practices that placed children in vulnerable positions and exposed them to violence. It would be helpful to hear about best practices and preventive strategies that could help address violence in environments where children lived.

94. **Mr. Wheeldon** (United Kingdom) said that the inclusion in the 2030 Agenda of a distinct target to end all forms of violence against children provided an opportunity that must be seized. Some progress had been made since the United Nations Study on Violence against Children, but the current scale of the problem required urgent attention. The United Kingdom worked tirelessly in its efforts to make progress, as evidenced by its role in the WePROTECT global alliance to end the sexual exploitation of children online, its support for the Fund to End Violence against Children, the leadership of the Prime Minister in the movement to end modern slavery and its decision to join the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children as a founding board member. The United Kingdom looked forward to working with the Special Representative on the board to tackle the issues presented in her report. He asked how she envisaged the relationship between the High Time to End Violence against Children initiative and the Global Partnership.

95. It was difficult to gauge the full scale of the problem of violence against children due to the sensitive nature of the issues, which made data collection challenging. It would be helpful to discuss how to develop and carry out consultations on data collection involving a range of stakeholders within and beyond the United Nations and what timeframe would be required.

96. **Ms. Moutchou** (Morocco) said that both the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Study on Violence against Children provided an opportunity to bring greater visibility to the scourge of violence against children. The report of the Special Representative focused on new means of communication and technology, particularly online abuse and exploitation, and their repercussions on the psychological, sociological and even physical development of children. Given the proposal in the report to develop new regulations to protect children against all forms of Internet abuse and exploitation, her delegation wished to know what the most appropriate framework would be for the development of those standards.

97. **Mr. AlMutairi** (Saudi Arabia) said that Saudi Arabia wished to support the United Nations in its efforts to combat violence against children. The Syrian regime was accusing his country of violating human rights while its forces operated without respect for human rights, especially the rights of children.

98. **Mr. Qassem Agha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that he had asked the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict why she had eliminated a mention of the coalition led by Saudi Arabia from her report and had not received an answer. The representative of Qatar had indicated that there were 60,000 Syrian refugees in Qatar, but the report issued by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had indicated that there were only 185 Syrian refugees in Saudi Arabia and 83 in Qatar. It was important to read the report before levelling accusations at other States.

99. **Mr. AlMutairi** (Saudi Arabia) said that, in regard to the accusations made against the coalition led by his country, he wished to reiterate that Saudi Arabia was a responsible country that respected international conventions and agreements, cooperated with the international community and was not afraid to shoulder its responsibility. It was ready to provide assistance in the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. He would not discuss the issue with the representative of the Syrian regime and would only discuss it with representatives of the United Nations.

100. **Mr. Ruiz Blanco** (Colombia) said that his delegation was encouraged by the increase in commitments in recent years to ensure the security and protection of children against violence and expressed concern for migrant children who were often separated from their families, which made them more vulnerable to violence and exploitation. For that reason, the establishment and implementation of measures focused on children, particularly the most vulnerable, were decisive in combating inequality.

101. The Government sought to prioritize the protection of children against all forms of violence and change attitudes and behaviours that tolerated violence by promoting a better understanding of the various forms of violence affecting children. In August 2016, it had passed a law establishing the national policy for comprehensive early childhood development. The programme had already benefited 1.2 million children through support for education coverage, teacher training, child development centres, vaccinations, health services and other areas. The Colombian Family Welfare Institute served as a model for providing comprehensive and intersectoral assistance to children and adolescent victims of sexual violence.

102. **Ms. Santos Pais** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children) said that, in response to questions concerning cyberbullying, legislative efforts were very recent. It was important to clearly identify the offenses that needed to be included, such as sexting, sextortion and harassment through the exposure of information that might be harmful to children. Many States were beginning to include protection orders in legislation, such as apologies or the withdrawal of harmful information. The international community must therefore build upon the preliminary existing practices.

103. In response to questions concerning the involvement of children, there were an increasing number of efforts to promote child-friendly materials that could be understood and used by children to protect them from violence and prevent or react to risks. Child-friendly versions of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure had been published in braille, because all children needed to have access to that information, especially children with disabilities. Consultations with children on bullying and cyberbullying had been promoted by a number of Governments in Latin America. More than 100,000 children had participated in the UNICEF "U-Report" initiative. In the report of the Secretary-General on protecting children from bullying, each section began with an important message from children, which had been collected through a process led by the ombudsman for children in Norway in a broad consultation on the issue. Those efforts were not costly or difficult; it was just a matter of will. The Children's Act in Zanzibar had been developed with the participation of young people. In Europe, children had participated in a recent debate on legislative reform, where they had said that the basic right to grow up happy was being denied.

104. In response to questions concerning the High Time to End Violence against Children initiative, the initiative was being led by all of the partners who were joining, from world leaders to Nobel peace laureates and Governments to civil societies, as well as children. The website was designed to showcase the good practices of all Member States. Currently, there was information concerning legislative reforms; the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and child-sensitive mechanisms that allowed them to share their stories, seek help, and benefit from advice. The social mobilization initiative was one of the efforts that had been developed after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. Nevertheless, more initiatives were needed in that regard.

105. In response to questions concerning the empowerment of children, it was fundamental for children, especially those deprived of liberty, to be able to make complaints and seek help without the risk of retaliation, manipulation or harassment. In most cases there were no oversight mechanisms; an independent mechanism, possibly an independent human rights institution, must be allowed to make unannounced visits, meet confidentially with children and engage with them. That would allow the system to improve rather than simply react to complaints.

106. In response to questions concerning migrant and refugee children deprived of liberty, there were very promising examples. Some national legislation included provisions stating that it was not acceptable to deprive children of liberty when they were on the move. Some States had implemented solutions involving guardianship and foster care and others had recognized rightful family reunification. There were many alternatives; States simply needed to have goodwill.

107. **Mr. Abdi** (Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)), said that the international community needed to work together to do more for the most disadvantaged children. Strong partnerships led to better results and were essential to overcoming the challenges facing them.

108. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly on children (A/71/175) he said that progress was undeniable. There had been a decrease in the under-five mortality rate, the maternal mortality rate, the number of deaths from malaria and the number of out-of-school children. In addition, the number of people using an improved drinking water source had increased. However, not all children were sharing in the progress that had been made, and inequalities persisted. Millions of children were denied vaccinations, proper sanitation, adequate nutrition and care; over 60 million children of primary school age were out of school; nearly a quarter of all children worldwide were affected by stunting, a key marker of child undernutrition; nearly 1 million children living with HIV lacked treatment; a growing number of children were affected by protracted conflicts and heightened instability or faced risks from natural hazards and epidemics; and the number of children who had migrated across borders or been forcibly displaced was at record levels. The United Nations system had never before responded to so many humanitarian situations in so many countries.

109. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/71/413), he said that the report focused on the challenges faced by migrant children. The rights of children must be guaranteed under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, regardless of their migration status. It was critical for States to train and provide necessary guidance to social and child workers, NGOs and professional groups to ensure that decisions were based on the best interests of the child. Measures to protect and support migrant children should also include access to education and other essential services such as health, psychosocial support and legal assistance. States must consider all measures to preserve family unity, as children were best cared for by their families. The report contained a number of good practices to protect refugee and migrant children and underscored the importance of collaboration.

110. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on collaboration within the United Nations system on child protection, he said that strengthened collaboration among the United Nations entities had led to significant progress in the protection of children from violence, exploitation and abuse across the world. Armed forces had released hundreds of children as a result of the Children, Not Soldiers campaign. Governments had adopted new laws criminalizing underage recruitment and developed age-assessment mechanisms. The eight countries targeted by the campaign had signed action plans committing to

prevent and end the recruitment and use of children by national security forces. Child protection actors of the United Nations system also recognized the importance of strengthening data collection and analysis to inform policies and programmes. National data surveys and response plans on violence against children had been launched in 25 countries. The 2030 Agenda included a target to end all forms of violence against children under Goal 16.

111. It was clear from the reports that the international community had the evidence, partnerships and frameworks in place and must now translate them into better results for children by ensuring that necessary and sustained investments were made and that children were at the centre of national plans, policies and programmes.

Organization of work

112. **Mr. Moussa** (Djibouti) reiterated the request made by his delegation for information on what steps had been taken by the Chair to include the oral presentation discussed at an earlier meeting. Time was of the essence, and he wished to draw attention to the urgency of the situation.

113. He also wished to draw attention to the fact that the members of the committee were ready to fulfil their mandate. He wished to remind the Chair that there was very little time left, as the situation had been ongoing since the first meeting of the Committee.

114. **Mr. Zewdu** (Ethiopia) said that his delegation wished to remind the bureau members and the Chair that the issue was being unnecessarily complicated by the Secretary of the Third Committee, and that the view of the Legal Counsel was needed. They had been told that the Office of Legal Affairs had already given its view, but they wished to hear it for themselves.

115. **Mr. Khan** (Secretary of the Committee) said that he wished to state for the record that he had carefully listened to the intervention made by the representative of Ethiopia.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.